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MIGNONETTE.

A SKETCH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE CURATE OF HOLY CROSS.

"Then in life's goblet freely press
The leaves that give it bitterness,
Nor prize the coloured waters less,
For in thy darkness and distress
New light and strength they give.
And he who has not learnt to know
How false its sparkling bubbles show,
How bitter are the drops of woe
With which its brim may overflow,
He has not learn'd to live."—LONGFELLOW.

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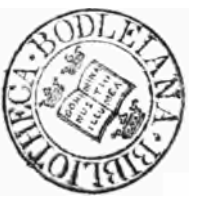

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INTRODUCTION.

THE story which is presented to the public in the following pages was sketched at a time when the Author was suffering under severe trial and disappointment.

Full of activity and perseverance, he had been for years looking for some opening which would afford him the power of exercising his energies. This had been at times offered him, but it had invariably happened, at the last moment, that something of an unexpected nature was against his making use of it.

It was a dreary time that,—far more dreary than many a hard-working man has an idea of,—and the Author during one part of it felt inclined to do what no soldier of Christ has any business to do,—he felt inclined to *despair*.

Goëthe, when he was in trouble, applied himself to the acquirement of a language as a distraction. The

Author followed his example so far, that he employed himself assiduously, in order not to think upon his difficulties; but inasmuch as it is in human nature to be always recalling past sorrows, he could not help in some degree embodying them, though ever so little, in the following tale. And if the tale itself teaches self-reliance, what harm is done?

E. R. S.

LONDON,
September, 1858.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

Page

MOONSHINE 1

CHAPTER II.

FOUL WEATHER 4

CHAPTER III.

CLEARING UP 11

CHAPTER IV.

SUNSHINE 18

CHAPTER V.

LAMFORD CLERICAL 31

CHAPTER VI.

ANTICIPATIONS 40

CHAPTER VII.

LAMFORD SOCIAL 50

CHAPTER VIII.

DREAMS 65

CHAPTER IX.

Page

THE VICARAGE 81

CHAPTER X.

KEMP 97

CHAPTER XI.

CELIBATE CLERGY 116

CHAPTER XII.

SET FAIR 130

CHAPTER XIII.

STARS OF THE NIGHT 140

CHAPTER XIV.

FOREBODINGS 160

CHAPTER XV.

THE FADING ROSE 176

CHAPTER XVI.

DELUSION 195

CHAPTER XVII.

EDWIN DACRE 214

CHAPTER XVIII.

THREE YEARS AGO 232

CHAPTER XIX.

MIGNONETTE 255

CHAPTER I.

MOONSHINE.

Romeo. Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear,
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops.
Juliet. Oh! swear not by the moon—the inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.
SHAKSPERE.

Wait—my faith is large in time
And that which shapes it to some perfect end.
TENNYSON.

"SEE! the moon is just rising over Holme-wood, Herbert—bright and clear; it will be fine, after all."

"It has been a long time coming, Emmy; and that which shines so bright at rising may lose lustre ere it sets."

Emmy was silent for a few moments—then in a lower tone she murmured, "Still distrustful?"

"No," returned her companion more cheerfully, and as if half-ashamed of his last remark; "it will come some day; I feel it. If I had any doubt in myself of that, your trustfulness, Emmy, would remove it."

There was no answer; but the light of the May moon, already fast advancing to assert her reign, sparkled in two dark eyes upturned to the speaker's face. Two tears glistened on their lashes — fitting response to his words.

"What are you two doing?" cried a voice—an elderly, matronly, but not unkind voice—from a party in front.

"Coming, Mamma," said Herbert cheerily,—(the questioner, be it observed by the way, was no relation of his): "We wanted to see the moon rise, and whether she would promise me a fine day for my travels, or not; and behold! she smiles."

"Well, come in, then, now," continued the matron, "or Emmy will catch cold;" and by way of example, she disappeared into the house with those who accompanied her.

The two behind turned to have one last look;—at least, they stopped; and except to do so, why should they tarry? Stay, they might have had something to say. Herbert was to leave to-morrow, to return he knew not when; most surely not until he was in a position to say something more practical to Emmy than on the subject of the moon,—in short, not until he had prospered in the world; and, alas! how long might it not be before that was to happen! Certainly they might have something, then, to say to each other, under the circumstances. Perhaps that was why they tarried; who knows?

The moon is gaining power now, giving promise of a regal night, and in the yet indistinct light which she is every moment making brighter, the forms of the

speakers may be clearly seen. His above the middle height, but firmly set on the ground, as if displaying determination to wrestle with adverse fortune; hers a very fairy's beside him,—so slight, so little, as to seem almost childish in this light, and only in the garments she carries, and the developed shape of her head and shoulders, denoting the woman's. Her hand is in his, and her face upturned as before.

"Emmy, is it right for me to love with no prospect to offer?"

"Yes," said the low voice.

"You may not think so always."

"Yes, I shall; I know I shall."

"Oh! me," he cried impatiently, "was there ever anything so hard? I never really felt my misfortunes till now;—no hope, no hope."

"Yes, there is," said the same soft tones.

"How? What hope?"

"Every hope. I feel sure it will all come right. Something will happen; I know something will."

"Emmy, my own Emmy."

"Yes," she said, with her other hand raised trustfully on his arm.

And there they stand, silent after this, mute actors in a hopeless dream.

CHAPTER II.

FOUL WEATHER.

Oh! rain that I am listening to,
You're but a doleful sound at best.
. . . . . .
But only now for this one day
Do go, dear rain! do go away!
Oh rain! with your dull twofold sound,
The dash hard by, and the murmur all around.—COLERIDGE.

"OH! Mamma, how I do hate a rainy day," said Cecile.

"Why should you?" said Madame d'Aulaincourt; "rainy days are necessary for us."

"Not necessary for bad spirits, Mamma."

"You have not bad spirits, surely."

"Yes, I have, shocking bad spirits," said the exuberant Cecile, "particularly on such a day as this. Frederica has what I call good spirits; rainy day or fine day makes no difference to her;" and Cecile put her arm round her cousin's neck as she sat in an adjacent chair, buried in her book.

"All people who have high spirits have corresponding visitations of the reverse," said the elder lady: "Frederica's spirits are good, because she always keeps them even."

"Frederica is a dear good thing," said Cecile; "but she mopes for all that, sometimes: don't you, Freddy?"

"Oh! I mope, if you like it," replied Frederica, looking up carelessly from her book.

"But I don't like it," returned Cecile; "I hate you when you mope; but you do it sometimes, nevertheless."

"I am sure I wish it was a fine day, Cecile," said her mother, "and there would be a chance of your not being so silly."

"Please don't call me silly, Mamma; I am only high-spirited,—and I heard you admire Christina Percy the other day for being high-spirited."

"What sits well on Christina Percy does not sit well on my Cecile," replied Madame d'Aulaincourt: "little girls of seventeen gain the reputation of being forward, if they do not put a check upon themselves."

Cecile blushed; the rebuke told. Frederica, compassionating her young cousin's confusion, said appealingly, "Oh! Aunty, that is not fair. How should we ever get on without Cecile's spirits? She is the life of the place?"

Madame d'Aulaincourt laughed, and parted the brown hair from her niece's forehead, as the latter had placed herself lovingly near her during the last speech. No one was prouder of her child than Mamma, and no one would have missed her good spirits more.

Frederica Repton was a year or two older than her cousin, and an orphan. Madame d'Aulaincourt, though English by birth and education, had married a French officer of high family, upon whose somewhat sudden

death she had returned with her only child to England, where she had resided ever since, uniting with this latter, in her education, her niece, who, not many years after that event, had had to lament the loss of both her parents. Possessed of a house and some land in the thriving market-town of Bishops Lamford, she had with them passed several years of tranquillity and comfort, respected and loved by all in that well-known community. Of course, however, they had their sorrows,—smiling externally as their lot might seem,—and Madame d' Aulaincourt's grief was this: Frederica's mother had died of consumption, and Frederica at the age of sixteen, some three years before, had shewn symptoms of being afflicted with a delicate chest. Since this time, her young niece's health,—we might almost say her eldest child's, for it is difficult to affirm in what respect she differed from Cecile, as to the relation in which the two practically stood,—had become a source of the deepest anxiety to her. Frederica was not actually so ill as to shut out reasonable hopes of her ultimate recovery. And this uncertainty constituted, perhaps, the severest part of her anxiety. Every fresh recurrence of bad symptoms, every renewal of those which were bright and cheering, were as so many lures to the entertaining of delusive hopes. To the alarmists of the place Frederica was doomed: in the eyes of careless observers she was only delicate; and those who were enthusiasts were sure it would all come right. But Madame d' Aulaincourt was at times painfully distressed for the future; and though a winter in Devonshire had been essayed with some success, yet the access of a

certain cough, and the view of her round shoulders and contracted chest, would warn her that it was almost wrong to hope.

It certainly does seem a sad pity, in our mortal vision, that the one so distinguished for her goodness and virtue, as well as for her gentleness and beauty, should be her who is marked out for early decline; but doubtless, to those who reflect, there is a good reason for this, too; and Frederica Repton was as much the instance of the bright ruling of a far-seeing Providence as are so many others. Let us not, however, anticipate. At present she was only an object of anxiety, not of apprehension. Every bad symptom is watched narrowly, to be sure; even now the doctor is expected on his daily visit of gossip, and news-bearing, and observation,—for he does little else on these occasions. Frederica's manner bears a marked contrast to that of Cecile. She is quiet, unobtrusive, and subdued, well setting off in her own demeanour the brilliancy of her more youthful cousin. In person she is a little above the middle height, with a slight stoop, which nevertheless gives a certain grace to her movements, though only indicative of the one failing in her health. She has an open rather than a pretty face. But her eyes are large, rich, and brown; her teeth even and white, setting off a soft, winning smile; and there is a colour, too—sometimes an unnatural colour—heightening the brilliancy of her eyes. Her hair is plentiful, and of that rich sunny brown which tells the English girl.

Cecile d'Aulaincourt, on the contrary, betrays, though ever so little, her dash of foreign blood. She is dark-

haired, dark-eyed, but, as a compromise, for mamma's sake, with English roses in her cheeks. When she laughs she almost closes her eyes, which sparkle between their lashes in a manner most tellingly French. But, again, her voice and mouth denote her island parentage. In figure she is tall, strong, and large-boned, giving promise of beauty some day on a considerable scale. But at present she is only seventeen, with all the clumsiness, aye, and grace too, as well as the *insouciance*, of a year younger.

"Dr. Crompton is later than usual," says Madame d' Aulaincourt, consulting the time-piece.

"Perhaps he won't come to-day," remarked Frederica.

"I am sure I hope he will," cries Cecile.

"Why, what can it matter to you?" asks her mother.

"Everything, Mamma, on such a day as this. It is the only thing to compensate me for the wretched morning I have passed."

"I was not aware you had been so miserable."

"I am sure I have been saying nothing else for the last half-hour."

"To that I agree; and if you will not occupy yourself, you will continue to be so. Why do not you finish your practising? you will be all behind again."

"There is no use my doing that, Mamma: Dr. Crompton will be here directly."

"Well; but he won't interfere with you."

"No; but I shall lose all the news."

"What news?"

"Why, the news the dear old man always brings. Let me see—there is, first and foremost, about Betty

Hadfield; then there is the account of the party at Barmfield; then there is Admiral Ayscough's will, which was to be opened last Monday. He is sure to know about that by this time."

"My dear child, you really must go to your practising. If you get such a chatterbox, you will become perfectly unbearable. None of these matters are any business of yours."

"I think," broke in Frederica, in her quiet way, "that Admiral Ayscough's will is a fair subject for curiosity, Aunty."

"I don't know, my dear," said Madame d'Aulaincourt: "it is pretty sure that his property will go to his only known relatives."

"But that is just the question, Mamma," cried Cecile: "It is by no means sure."

"You know that Edward Wordsworth and his brother are only very distant cousins, and that he was not on terms with them," urged Frederica.

"We have only Cecile and Dr. Crompton's word for that," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, shaking her head.

"And Nora Deane's, Mamma,—Nora Deane's, who is sweet upon Edward Wordsworth, they say."

Madame d'Aulaincourt looked so severe at this speech, that even Cecile might have been abashed, but that quiet Frederica was fairly tickled at her cousin's slang, and broke into a more hearty laugh than was her custom. At the same moment, too, the long hoped-for Doctor hove in sight, driving doggedly through the rain, which pelted down with such determination that Cecile was clear it could not last.

"Now, Cecile, you must go away: I want to speak with Dr. Crompton alone—that is, alone with your cousin."

"Oh, Mamma! only let me hear about Admiral Ayscough, and I will go."

"You silly girl! The Admiral has not left his property to you."

"Who knows, Mamma? I dare say he has left it to some one about as unlikely."

CHAPTER III.

CLEARING UP.

After long stormes and tempests over-blowne,
The sunne at length his ioyous face doth cleare;
So when as fortune all her spight hath showne,
Some blisfull hours at last must needs appeare;
Else should afflicted wights oftimes despeire.—SPENSER.

THE Doctor at Bishops Lamford was a particularly nice doctor—clean, bald-headed, frilled, watch-chained—with rich round tones in his voice that quelled his patients' complaints in a moment. He was an universal favourite, and justly; for he was charitable and compassionate, and prodigal of his assistance to those who most wanted it. He was full of good stories, fresh news, and hospitality. Popular with the young people, of course, all of whom he had brought into the world for many more years past than this deponent is able to affirm,—a circumstance he used to delight to call to the recollection of each of his young acquaintances on very inopportune occasions, and at indiscreet moments. A ladies' man, too, and a prodigious flirt with young and old, but always in good part, and for the sake of giving pleasure, and of adding to the general hilarity. He had no family, but dwelt with a very precise, spinster-like sister, who did not under-

stand him, but who passed her life in bewailing that he did not understand her,—a position in which he good-humouredly acquiesced on all occasions.

Cecile was hurrying out of the drawing-room as he entered it, being bidden thereunto peremptorily by Mamma.

"Whither so fast, Ma'amselle?" cried the Doctor, catching her by the arm: "Why, I only came to see you."

Cecile began to laugh, and her eyes to twinkle, as she said, "But Mamma says you will want to talk to Frederica alone."

"Nonsense! what should I want to talk to her about, eh? Your mother is jealous, and wants to talk to me alone herself; but I did not come through this pelting rain for that. Come along." And he drew her arm through his, and led her, pretending to resist, into the room she had just quitted.

Madame d'Aulaincourt knew the Doctor, however, well, and therefore yielded to the infliction without a murmur.

"And how is *my* child?" said the Doctor, taking Frederica's hand, and looking her keenly in the face: "You know you are my child,—I brought you into the—"

"Oh, never mind that!" cried Cecile: "you have told her of that so often."

"*You* are not my child," said the Doctor, turning to Cecile; "you are a French chicken: I would have nothing to do with you. But my child here, how is she?" And so on.

After the patient had detailed her ills, and it had

been discovered that she was getting on, which, being interpreted, meant that she was just as well as she had been many days before, and no better and no worse, the Doctor turned round to the mistress of the house, and said—

"Well, you know the news?"

"No: what news?" asked Cecile, open-mouthed.

"Jacob Purcell's farm at Welstead was burnt down last night."

Cecile looked disappointed.

"Much property lost?" asked Madame d'Aulaincourt.

"Some £2,000."

"Dear me! and not insured?"

"For about one-third," was the reply.

"Let me see—he is not a man of very good character, I think."

"Oh! I don't know about that," said the Doctor, who hated speaking ill of any one: "as good as his neighbours, I take it."

"The work of an incendiary, I conclude?"

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders, to imply that he thought that nothing was more likely.

All this was torture to Cecile, who was dying to ask about Admiral Ayscough, and in whose opinion Jacob Purcell might have shared the fate of his own farm, if by such a consummation the longed-for topic could have been sooner reached.

"Dear me," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, "the sun is coming out; we shall have a fine afternoon."

"I must be off, then. I am very behindhand as it is." He got up, as if to keep his word; but it was perfectly clear he had not lost an iota of Cecile's im-

patience, which it was only a part of his good-humoured habit to delay gratifying. As he drew on his glove, he looked her vacantly in the face, and said, "Let me see, you are one of Edward Wordsworth's champions, are you not?"

"N—no; that is, yes—partly so," said Cecile, fearful lest her answer should shut her out from what seemed coming.

"Well, then, comfort him when you see him, for he will need it."

"Nay, Doctor," interrupted Madame d'Aulaincourt, "he is no favourite here; and his affairs are no concern of ours. Still, as you no doubt allude to Admiral Ayscough's will, may I ask if what you know is a secret?"

"Certainly not; or at all events, will not be so very long," was the reply: "All the funded property has gone to another cousin, an old comrade during the war, and Bickerton Firs is left to a mere stranger."

There was a silence; and the Doctor seemed to have lost all his jocularity as he disclosed his information. It was not with a sad or a severe, but with only a grave air, that he regarded Cecile, as she returned his stare with open eyes and mouth. Frederica raised her mild countenance to him in a mute but slightly expressed surprise; while Madame d'Aulaincourt, with her eyes cast on the ground, added her part to a pretty picture.

"What a share!" she said at length.

"Surely, Aunty, you would not wish to see him at Bickerton?" said Frederica, who knew how very ill Madame d'Aulaincourt thought of the young man.

"I do not approve of Edward Wordsworth," said the elder lady, decisively; "but that is no reason why he should be wronged."

"Nay, not so fast," cried the Doctor: "You will beat your daughter, my dear lady, at this rate. Before you are satisfied that a man has sustained a wrong, you must be quite clear that he possesses a right."

"I stand partly corrected," said the elder lady. "You mean, that the relationship between him and the Admiral was too distant for him to suppose any. Well, I grant it, as against any nearer claimant. But as against a stranger, surely the clue of affinity, be it nothing further, creates one."

"I hardly know," said the Doctor, "whether we ought to go so far; though practically we do allow that, in the absence of any will on the part of the dead man, the next of *kin* becomes his heir. But if you extend this rule to those cases where the former may wish to dispose of his own, what becomes of the value of a man's own at all?"

"Perhaps so," replied Madame d'Aulaincourt, shaking her head; "still I cannot divest myself of the feeling of injustice in those cases where a person leaves his property to strangers, having *any* kith or kin remaining at the time, who might be benefited by it."

"You forget young Wordsworth's misconduct."

"No, I do not."

"Nor that he had offended the old gentleman in his tenderest point."

"Nor that, either, which I take on your authority; but I cannot reconcile myself to a fine property

going to strangers. He might have tied it up; he might have fettered its enjoyment; but to leave him nothing!"

"Oh! he has left him something: he has left him £200 a-year."

"Then I have nothing more to say," replied the lady.

"Why, you are as easily satisfied as your indignation was rapidly raised," said the Doctor: "I begin to think that Miss Cecile does not get all her quick blood from the enemy."

"What now?" asked Madame d'Aulaincourt, good-humouredly.

"Only one piece of news; but mind, this time what I have to tell is mere gossip,—a piece of rumour with her hundred tongues," said the Doctor, holding up his finger to Cecile, who was sitting with her hands clasped over one knee, in rather a nursery attitude of expectation: "it may be untrue, and I hope it is. I only mention it as a caution against your forming a too hasty judgment, and it must not be repeated." After a pause—"It is whispered that the new-comer's character will as ill bear sifting as Edward Wordsworth's."

"Oh! let us not dream of that until we have reason," said Frederica Repton, impatiently.

"So say I, my dear child," returned the Doctor, taking her hand, and pressing it as he rose to depart. "I for one will think ill of no man as long as he behaves himself well amongst us; of course, unless he comes with some known spot on his character."

"But who is the new-comer?" asked Cecile.

"I know almost as little as yourself. His name is

Capel. He is young, that is, under thirty, and Bickerton is a great windfall for him, for he has been for years struggling against adverse fortune and narrow means."

"Then he is to be pitied," said Frederica's mild tones.

"Now, or then?"

"You know not what I mean," was the quick reply.

"To be sure not; we none of us ever do know what it means when the ladies say that a man who has just come into four thousand a-year is to be pitied. It strikes me that the *bouquet* of Bishops Lamford will look its best this winter."

No reply was made to this remark, and the Doctor, after a little more of his ordinary *badinage* with Miss Cecile, took his leave.

CHAPTER IV.

SUNSHINE.

> Personal talk
> About friends who live within an easy walk,
> Or neighbours, daily, weekly in our sight.
>
> WORDSWORTH.

THE three ladies remained for some time in silence after the Doctor's departure. Madame d'Aulaincourt at first hardly knew how she felt at the prospect which his communication had opened. Frederica was ordinarily taciturn; and Cecile's thoughts were so busy that they left no work for her tongue. To the elder lady the subject might well afford food for reflection. The advent to a small rural locality of a young unmarried man, of whom no one knows much, either as to character or pursuits, but who nevertheless is to assume the position which large possessions always give in such places, is in most cases a circumstance that naturally must create anticipations and surmises; and among those who have families, and with their daughters arrived at womanhood, some degree of doubt and incertitude as well. Of course, among well-bred people, it is not the custom now-a-days to debate who the new-comer will marry, if indeed he is likely to marry at all. But good and single-hearted mothers will naturally be inclined to look forward with some

alarm in such a case; naturally to wish that circumstances had turned out differently. The notion of one's own girls being put into competition with others is unpleasant; the notion of their being passed over disagreeable; the notion of there being a competition at all undesirable. And yet, be a mother ever so right-minded, such feelings must occur to her. She cannot refuse to make the new-comer's acquaintance, and yet she cannot desire that it should be more than an acquaintance. He may be pleasing, and of fascinating manners, and he may especially take to the society offered by her family. She must do like the rest—accord it to him, even at the risk of seeming to invite him to prefer her's to that of the rest. Why was he not married already? it would have saved so much hesitation and so much annoyance.

Bishops Lamford was at this time uncomfortably composed in reference to these topics. It rather overflowed with attractive young ladies of a marriageable age, and the other sex seemed as singularly to have died out. There were some curates, as we shall see by-and-bye, but all the world cannot marry the curate; and there were one or two other gentlemen whose acquaintance we shall also make. But these were all: while, on the other hand, the beauties of Bishops Lamford were renowned for number and excellence the county through. There is nothing particular in all this, we will allow. Young ladies who are properly brought up do not, thank Heaven, now-a-days think of nothing else but matrimony. They have aims and occupations of a far higher and holier nature to follow out; and if Providence does place them in the married

state, it is as a part of those aims and duties in life with which a pure Christian education has furnished them. So say we also of the fair ones of Bishops Lamford. We do not believe that any of them thought more of their future worldly state than of a picture with a veil across it, to remove which the time had not arrived, and to dream of removing which would have appeared otherwise than seemly, if not wrong.

Still, good and well brought up in their several degrees as we will hope they all were, it must be allowed that the sudden arrival in the midst of them of a young man with four thousand a-year is a circumstance which, in the mind of an unbiassed observer, will raise but one reflection, namely, that it was more than likely that he would be attracted to or by some one of them. And hence it was that Madame d'Aulaincourt felt uneasy, as she considered the many ways in which the arrival of the new inheritor of Bickerton Firs might affect the little community in general, and her own part of it in particular.

The three ladies were buried in their reflections, when the door opened, and a tall, handsome-looking girl, with long black hair in curls, full sparkling eyes, and some colour, looked in. It ought to be mentioned that most of the families resident in Bishops Lamford lived in such intimacy that their female members came and went to each other's dwellings without announcement and unchallenged.

"Well, Nora," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, "won't you come in?"

"I can't stay," said the other, sullenly, and yet not uncivilly: "As the rain had stopped, and I was too

fidgetty to stay in the house, I thought I would just come and ask you if you had heard about Bickerton."

"Yes, my dear: come in, and let us talk about it. We have only just heard of it, and hardly know what to think."

"Not know what to think!" said the tall girl, indignantly: "there can be but one opinion; and that is the wicked injustice of such a will." And the speaker walked a little way into the room, and rested one hand on the back of a tall chair near her. Her figure was slight and well formed, and being drawn up to its full height, presented in the present excited state of her manner a rather striking effect.

"Well, but Nora," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, calmly, "you must bear in mind that our friend Mr. Wordsworth had offended the Admiral, as I am told."

"And that he was next to no relation at all, is what you are going to add," replied Nora, with the slightest possible sneer on her handsome lip; and then, with a sigh, "Well, that is what they all say, and I suppose I must believe the defence for such conduct a good one, in spite of myself. But say what you will, it does seem hard that a fine estate should go out of a family to a mere stranger, as long as there is even a pretender to a relationship in it still remaining. I say it would be hard if Mr. Wordsworth were a mere pretender."

"I think," said Frederica, in her mild tones,—"I think, Nora, you forget that Bickerton only came into the family a few years ago, by purchase. It is no time-honoured inheritance against whose alienation you are thus pleading."

To this remark Nora made no reply.

"I look upon it as hard, too, Nora," resumed Madame d'Aulaincourt, "but not on the grounds you mention. I look upon it as hard, because it is a disappointment to Mr. Wordsworth, which neither he nor we were prepared for. As a matter of right, he has next to nothing to complain of."

"I cannot expect you, of all persons, to think otherwise, Madame d'Aulaincourt," said Nora, in a low tone, "knowing your often-expressed opinion of this poor young man."

"That should make my compassion for him all the more valuable. I do not think he deserves much; but I can sympathize with his disappointment in a matter in which every one's expectations were but the echo of his own. I am sorry too, because, whatever his faults, which perhaps I may judge too severely, I would have preferred to see him on the road to amendment among us than a stranger, who, if he were a paragon of virtue, can have no claim upon our sympathies for some time to come."

"That is like you—just like you;" said Nora, pressing her hand: "if he had judges as ready to be convinced as you, he would soon right himself. Nay, don't shake your head; you do not bear in mind the drawbacks he has had. He is nothing to me, I assure you, so you need not scrutinize me so searchingly."

"I hope not," said Madame d'Aulaincourt.

"Indeed not: I am only taking the part of one whom I think has been judged harshly. You forget the nature of his bringing up; you forget how, with as fine a family as a man could have, his father neglected them all to educate strangers, whom he brought

into his house,—how all a parent's care was lavished upon those who had no claim on him by blood."

"Edward was well placed at school and college, Nora; he had a good religious education."

"True, but he had a home where no moral virtue was ever practised. He learnt the Ten Commandments and the Catechism, and he saw that his tutors were good men; but at home, when was ever any moral, or domestic, or religious duty practically exercised before him? If he was not a brother, it was because he had never had a sister but in name; if he was an impatient and rebellious son, it was because he never had parents—that is, in practice."

"Come, Nora, let us get back to Bickerton," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, anxious to stop the subject: "cannot you find anything in the new-comer's character or life to need so brave a champion?"

"Oh! plenty," said Nora, turning away half-vexed: "report has pulled him to pieces already. He is a *roué* and a lady-killer,—and a gambler, I should not wonder."

"Are you ready to believe all this?"

"Not I: I have no quarrel with him, poor man. "He has not, or had not, a penny, and was therefore probably friendless. He has by a freak of fortune fallen into a fine estate, and I hope it will make him happy. Probably, like Edward Wordsworth, he has had his drawbacks: he has been imprudent, and of course, in this good-natured world, his indiscretions are profligacies, and what are really unhappy propensities have been set down as incurable habits. If he were a duke or a marquis, or even a very rich

commoner, he would never be received with a whit the less cordiality, or spoken of with a whit more disapprobation. No, I do not think the worse of him."

"Well, you are an honest, if not a very judicious, advocate," said Madame d'Aulaincourt: "but this is all report, you say. Cannot you give us some information more authentic, and on points equally interesting? Who is this new Lord of Bickerton? Is he a gentleman? What is his name, and his former occupation?"

"All that I know of him has been gathered from a letter which mamma received this morning from Edward's solicitor. The new owner of Bickerton is named Capel. He is a gentleman of good, but not rich, family. For himself, he has nothing. He is somewhere about nine-and-twenty in age. He has travelled,—indeed, his acquaintance with Admiral Ayscough commenced and ended nine years ago in the Mediterranean, for since then they have never met. He must have powers of fascination, however, for the Admiral seems never to have forgotten him. People say, now, that he was continually speaking of his excellence and his early promise, though they took little notice of it then, not foreseeing what has since happened. If report speaks true, Mr. Capel has not fulfilled that promise. One thing, however, may be said in his favour, he is a ripe and fine scholar, having taken high honours at his university; and when his means of subsistence have failed, which has been not seldom, has always on this account been able to support himself by private tuition, or writing for the reviews. There, now you know all I know."

"And a pretty piece of news it is for such a sober-minded person as I," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, smiling; while she added to herself more gravely, "A nice look-out for such a society as ours, the arrival of such a man! talented, a fine scholar, with rare powers of fascination, but never having had any fixed profession, and of doubtful, if not more than doubtful, character;"—then aloud, "Come, Nora, there is our early dinner-bell; you must make your luncheon with us."

And Nora was not unwilling, for she loved and was loved by both the mother and the girls, and the conversation just recorded had amused, if it had not soothed, her somewhat excited imagination.

Of course, in such a place as Bishops Lamford, the news which had been communicated by the Doctor, and improved upon by Nora Deane, soon became the ruling topic of interest to the public at large. It was September, the commencement of the brightest season in the English year, and numerous were the gatherings at home, and at picnic, and for moonlight stroll, in all which the subject was discussed, and turned, and twisted, and canvassed, just as conjecture, or a piece of fresh news or odd rumours, more or less true, as the case might be, affected its complexion. But after all, little more than what has been already recorded was gathered during several weeks on the subject, and it might, and probably would, have died a natural death for the present, if any piece of gossip of a more satisfactory nature had turned up to take its place.

One evening, however, at a large party at Colonel

Deane's, the papa of the young lady already introduced to the reader, the subject received a fresh filip, which considerably added to its interest, and restored it at once to its old place in the public favour.

"You heard no news about Bickerton, Mr. Percy, when you were in Town, did ye?" asked old Miss Crompton, who, in right of her age and her ill-nature, was seated in the best place in the room, and was in some feather in consequence.

"On the contrary," replied the measured accents of the courtly old attorney, "I went up for the special purpose of becoming acquainted with the new tenant."

"What! with Mr. Capel?" exclaimed several fair voices at once.

"Capel: just so," said the old man, speaking provokingly slow, and smacking his lips, as it he was tasting port-wine: "Yes! Mr. Capel.—I went to see if my poor services would be required, as they had been by his predecessor; and I am pleased to say that he seemed in every way desirous to avail himself—"

"Of course," interrupted Mr. Lester Harbottle, the sporting young gentleman of the locality, whose manner of address savoured of the abrupt,—"he would not lose *you*. But tell us what he is like."

"Yes, tell us, Mr. Percy, what he is like," said chorus.

"Really," said the old gentleman, still more courteously, "I cannot pretend to portrait-painting; I leave to other and abler hands that task. I can only say he seemed to me a gentleman."

"No better portrait can be required than that," said old Miss Crompton, majestically.

No one ventured to contradict this *fiat*, and there was a slight pause in consequence, which Mr. Percy happily relieved by saying, "I was very much impressed by his behaviour to our friend Wordsworth, and in particular by his manner—"

"Mr. Wordsworth!" said Nora Deane, turning at once at the name; "you do not mean to say you saw him?"

"Yes, I do," said Percy again, with his courtly bow: "Mr. Capel was anxious to meet him, and was pleased to wish my presence on the occasion."

"Meet Ed—Mr. Wordsworth?" said Nora, flushing: "very uncalled-for and indiscreet, I think."

"That depends on his motives, does it not?" said Madame d'Aulaincourt, mildly.

"Surely, surely," replied Mr. Percy: "Mr. Capel's motives were most disinterested. He desired to be of use to Mr. Wordsworth; and, first of all, to know him."

"And what kind of assistance might he have thought proper to offer?" asked Nora, scornfully.

"He did not offer to give up the property, did he, Percy?" cried the Colonel, from the other end of the room.

"Precious flat if he had," said Lester Harbottle, *sotto voce.*

"The kind of assistance he proposed to offer," returned the attorney, holding up his hand, as if in deprecation of being asked two questions at once, "I am not at liberty to mention; nor was it expressly stated at that interview. Indeed, Mr. Wordsworth's manner was too hasty to permit our getting so far."

"I suppose he cut up rough," said Lester.

"Of course he could not accept assistance from such a quarter," remarked Nora, proudly.

"I cannot pretend to say he should do so, if you affirm not," returned the attorney, in the same tones: "but our friend's manner was hasty and unconciliating, as it seemed to me, considering the purity of Mr. Capel's motives."

"And what did Mr. Capel say to Wordsworth's ill-temper?" said another gentleman; "as ill-temper I gather it to be."

"Mr. Capel behaved like a man of tne world," replied Mr. Percy; "he did not allow himself to be irritated in the least: although very little older in fact than our friend Wordsworth, he seemed to have the advance of him in experience and in self-control."

"It is very easy for a man in his circumstances to keep his temper," said Nora, coldly.

"I wish we could find out something authentic about this Mr. Capel," said Frederica Repton to Mr. Henry Motcombe, (one of the curates of the place,) with whom she had been conversing in a low tone during the foregoing discussion.

"What would you wish to know?" asked the other who was leaning over her chair.

"I would wish to know whether he is clever, brave or the reverse,—whether he will make himself liked, or will keep himself aloof from us all; in short, whether Bickerton has fallen into worthy hands?"

"I can tell you what little I know of him," said the Curate, in the same low tone; "though I do not think it will help you much.

"You! Do you, then, know him?" And she

turned round and looked the speaker full in the face with her large, enquiring, too lustrous eyes.

"I was at Oxford with him: he was of my college, and my year."

The words were not so softly spoken as to escape being heard by others than her for whom they were intended; and a general clamour was raised at the closeness of the Curate, in keeping such important information to himself. He quickly, however, and gracefully, declined any knowledge of importance on the subject, saying that it was some eight years back since they met, and that he might be a very altered man.

"Well, but you can tell us something more than we know," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, somewhat reproachfully: for the Curate was well received and considered to be on very intimate terms at her house.

"I can, indeed, tell you very little," was the quiet reply: "Herbert Capel was in college with me, and I knew him then as intimately as most men know one another in such a case. He was a first-class man, an Ireland Scholar, and the first man of his year. He was liberal in habits, careless and open-hearted. But men change very much in after-life. I can tell you no more."

"Do you think, Motcombe, that he will be an acquisition to this place?" asked the Colonel; "that is, putting all together that you do know? for I suspect you know more than you are inclined to tell."

"I think he will," was the quiet answer.

"Cannot you get Mr. Motcombe to tell us what he is like?" whispered Cicele to Frederica.

"Oh, Cecile! how can you?" said the latter, in a whisper.

But Lester Harbottle saved the young lady the trouble and her confusion, by crying aloud, "Can't you tell us what the chap is like, Mr. Motcombe, and whether he has got anything to say for himself?"

"He was very well-looking in my time," was the reply; "and as to your other question, it may suit *you* better to know that he used to sit a horse and was as good a shot as any about here. But all this may have changed: men's tastes vary with their hopes and experiences."

There was so much sadness in this, that Frederica looked up with a glance which betokened more interest than she seemed aware of. But Lester Harbottle's opinion of the new-comer had gone up considerably during the last few minutes; and he wended his way homeward that night rejoicing.

CHAPTER V.

LAMFORD CLERICAL.

Afar from the blast of polemicks,
Afar from their hate and their strife,
No scorn of the brawling declaimer
Should turn the still course of my life.

COXE'S CHRISTIAN BALLADS.

IN giving our readers a short insight into the social economy of Bishops Lamford, we cannot very well miss out the clergy, though we have grave doubts on the subject, for fear these pages should incur the imputation of being meant to form what is commonly called "a religious novel," and against which we respectfully enter our protest.

The truth is that, now-a-days, when the clergy of all shades and parties are attempting conscientiously to do their duty, and to remedy the mischief of the past, it is next to impossible, in attempting to draw a faithful picture of society as at present constituted in a country town, to avoid the questions which their exertions, and the inability on the part of some to comprehend them, are sure to give rise. And though we have no intention of blending such subjects with the main course of our tale, we cannot, in laying before our readers the characters of the three curates of Lamford, avoid hinting at their nature and existence, be it in ever so slight a degree.

In fact, to omit this duty would be equivalent to leaving a part of our canvas untouched by the brush. Lamford has its doctor, its attorney, its farming community, and its landed gentry; but it has also its clergy, who are an integral part of it, considered as a family. We have no call to pass over one part of it more than the other, and if we do touch, therefore, on Church matters, we beg our readers to believe that it will not be with any view to controversy, excepting where such may be necessary to exhibit the characters of the three gentlemen which call for description at our hands.

No Church question in the abstract is intended to be advocated, nor the side of any one party to the discredit of another.

Indeed, we have to congratulate ourselves that, in the present instance, a contrary course is quite unnecessary. Lamford had no Church quarrels, so to speak. That there was occasionally a soreness on some one of such subjects, these pages will perhaps shew. But that was the necessary consequence of the advance of religious opinion in certain quarters. The time has passed when the ministry was considered *only* as a privilege, but the time has not come when religious unity is to be ascendant; and so, between the two, religious differences will exist in most places. Here, in Lamford, there was much harmony even in the face of obstacles, which might have well disturbed it; and a good deal of this was doubtless owing to the three excellent curates who administered to its spiritual wants, and on whose characters we shall have to say something.

Bishops Lamford was a college living, but at the same time did not labour under the difficulties which some college livings have had to suffer. True, the Vicar was non-resident, was a pluralist, had many of the good things to which others might lay a claim to as well as he; but he was a good, painstaking, laborious man, a most accomplished scholar, and had fairly earned by his attainments all he possessed. No one knew better than he the spiritual destitution of this particular parish, and short of actually residing in it, no one could do more than he did to remedy existing evils in it. For this purpose he had placed there the Rev. Frederick Strong, who, by his energy, his character, and his years, was well fitted to be the *locum tenens* of a clerical absentee. The first was undoubted, the second unblemished, and the third, fifty.

At the time of which we write, he had been in the place some ten years, and had certainly raised the position of the Church therein in many respects. The schools had been built and set going by his instrumentality, which, considering the great difficulties which existed against their establishment, redounded greatly to his credit. He had induced the magnates of the place to loose their purse-strings, and had dunned parishioners and non-parishioners, auxiliary societies and philanthropists, to such purpose, that a very respectably sized building, with some pretension to elegance, now reared its head near the parish church. Moreover, he had opened rooms for divine service on Sundays in more than one of the outlying districts, the distance of which served but too often for an excuse to those who felt disinclined to attend

the parish church, and was in many instances a positive obstacle to others who desired to do so. All this had rendered him much respected and admired.

But, like the rest of the world, Mr. Strong had his peculiarities, which in his case were certainly drawbacks. First of all, he was in manner what is vulgarly called a bear, and at times could allow himself to be positively uncivil. Of course he was not himself aware of this foible, and possibly he looked upon his own ordinary manner as something hearty, and bluff, and honest. But it did not at times the less serve to put him into a false position, or to make him on some occasions a subject of merriment—call it by no harder term—on this account. The upper classes in Lamford for the most part got used to this peculiarity, and out of regard to his other excellent qualities, ceased to care about it so far as it personally affected themselves, although there might be a few who, on particular occasions, felt disposed to resent it; but these were exceptions, and on the whole, among them he was decidedly and deservedly popular.

But with the poor it was a very different matter. Among them he was looked up to, but with fear. He frightened parents into sending their children to school: with the wavering he was peremptory, not attempting to persuade or teach, much less to reason with them. If a parishioner found his way into chapel instead of the parish church, he blew him up. He was uncompromising with a Dissenter; and a wandering sheep might not unreasonably hesitate in his return to the fold, if there was a chance of Mr. Strong's crossing his path before he got there. Alas! what will not

tact do? or, rather, will not the want of it actually mar? Here was a good man, an active priest, a sound divine; but practically, if he did not do harm, he left much good undone, because he had it not in him to acquire this one accomplishment. Another blemish in his character was one which would be derogatory to that of any individual of the community, and was therefore the more so in one who filled the office of a Christian priest. Strong could not always keep himself from talking of his neighbour's affairs, and, if there was nothing to talk about, from busying himself to supply the deficiency. The worst of it was, too, that this was in reference to subjects which it was not necessary that a parson should concern himself about. And yet he never committed this error ill-naturedly; if he did retail a little piece of scandal, he invariably accompanied it with some high testimony to the qualities of the person in question, which no doubt he really meant. It was not the mischief he intended, but the mischief he did, which was the pity. He was a warm, kind-hearted man at bottom, but possessed of a morbid tendency to enquire into his neighbours' affairs, and to retail his discoveries; and everybody knows what the upshot of that always is.

Still he was popular, and many people took even this fault good-humouredly. "That was Strong all the world over," they would say, on an instance of this kind occurring—Bishops Lamford spoke of their parsons sometimes, by-the-bye, with more affection than respect—or they would laugh and discard the story in question as worthless. But even in such a rhinoceros-hided community as this, there were little

spots where the arrow would hold fast;—it was a pity, for without this, his popularity might well be envied.

Very different was the Rev. Henry Motcombe, the last new comer, though the next in order of seniority to Mr. Strong. He had been strongly recommended to Dr. Trentham by his former incumbent at Torquay, and had probably been placed in his present position with a view to counterbalancing some of Mr. Strong's peculiarities, and in consequence of his possessing qualities which the latter lacked. Strong did not at first regard his advent into the place with much favour, for he had been hitherto permitted, perhaps out of respect to the length of time he had been in the place, and to the undoubted good he had done in it, to choose the junior curate himself; but Dr. Trentham had an object in view—which was the establishing of a daily service, and in accordance with the wish of the majority of the parish, of a choral service as well, both which innovations Strong had evaded at present; and to commence which would require not only a person possessed of tact, but also, in respect to the latter of them, of a person who had experience on the subject.

No feud, however, or shadow of a disagreement, ensued between the new-comer and Mr. Strong: the former's manners were so sweet, and his composure so unruffled, that all the latter's abruptness fell dead upon him, and they were soon both of them excellent friends.

After a short time the arrangement of the choral service fell into Motcombe's hands absolutely, and the carrying it out soon called into play all that devotion, energy, and tact in his character which we shall have

occasion, through this history, to remark pretty generally.

The great difficulty he had to overcome in this respect was the readiness on the part of nearly every one in the place who knew, or did not know anything on these subjects, to tender their advice, and sometimes their services, in carrying them out. To put the matter under the direction of a fixed, responsible head, to deliver the organist from the persecution of every one who brought him novel and marvellous chants just imported from churches addicted to florid harmony, required a deal of perseverance and good-humour, as well as to make the people understand that there was a fixed standard of ecclesiastical music, and that as it was part of the service of the Church, it could only be selected with propriety by the ministers of the Church themselves. All which at first occasioned some dismay and a little heartburning, soon to disappear and melt away, when it came to be seen how well the new curate had done his work.

But it was not only the outward display which called forth Mr. Motcombe's powers. None knew better than he the tendency of country choirs to make an exhibition of their services; and all his energy, joined to the deep religious devotion of his mind, was devoted to obviating this glaring blot on the purity of public worship. With the boys he was indefatigable during the week-days in making them understand the nature of the task they had to discharge, as well as in teaching them the full meaning of what they had to sing on each next occasion; not stimulating their exertions with mere promise of present reward, but inflaming

their ardour with tales of the piety of holy choristers in days gone by, such as of the persecution of the African twelve, and others. And even the men he lost no opportunity of affectionately warning on this point, in order to induce them to realize the very high privilege which falls to the lot of the "white-robed band" in the house of God. So that this advantage resulted,—that whatever objection was raised as to the propriety of the change, no one thought it was unmeaning; for the singers sang as if they knew what they were singing and where they were. This will be enough to give an idea of Mr. Motcombe's character as a priest. Generally, his manners made him popular, and very soon rendered him an acquisition both to the society in Lamford and to his coadjutors in the parish.

Of Mr. Trevanion little need be said at present: he was only in Deacon's orders, and had arrived in Lamford about three months previous to Mr. Motcombe. Just at present he might be said to be learning his duty; and he had two good orthodox specimens to learn it from. He had a great respect for the superior qualities of both, though, from the fact of Motcombe's being nearer to himself in age, he might be said to have more sympathy with him than with his superior. We shall have more to say about him by-and-bye.

From what has been already said on these matters, our readers will have gathered that our Vicar and his curates are High Churchmen. This is so; though in practice, at all events, they are not extreme men. There is no ceremonial to vex the tender conscience,

nor any more violent straining of the ritual to agitate him who fears the encroachments ot Rome. Still they are High Churchmen, and consequently a deep source of irritation to poor Mr. Harbottle, who discovers as many malpractices in them as could be laid to their charge if they were as high as the steeple itself. This is, however, not so: and a proof that it is not so consists in the general harmony which prevails, and which not even his unhappy bewilderments can disturb.

Would that it were always so! Bishops Lamford in this respect may well form a model worthy to be followed.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTICIPATIONS.

Will he hunt? will he ride? will he shoot?
  Or gamble? or smoke and drink brandy?
Or polka and play on the flute,
  Like a regular drawing-room dandy?
Will he lead a gay bachelor's life?
  Drive a tandem, or p'raps four-in-hand?
Or take one of our girls for a wife,
  And quietly farm his own land?—ANONYMOUS.

MR. MOTCOMBE entered Trevanion's room one day,—

"Do you know, Trevanion, I sometimes feel inclined to think Mr. Strong a great puzzle."

"How a puzzle?"

"Why, I look around me and see his popularity, and I behold, when I go to the schools, the evidence of his unflagging energy in his Master's cause; and I see every Sunday, in the outlying districts, his devotion, in the means he has afforded the poor of attending divine service at a reasonable distance from their own doors; and then I find him acting in some little matter as if he was ignorant of the common principles of Christianity."

"To what do you allude?"

"Why, first of all, to his trying to keep that dissenting girl from getting a place in a Churchman's family."

"Well, but should not there be some distinction?"

"I grant you there should in a case where two candidates of equal excellence in other respects had offered themselves. But this was not so: she was the only one in the place, as Strong allowed, (I don't know the girl myself,) fit for the situation. And the Miss Trenthams speak so well of her, that the only chance of the Church's reclaiming her should not be cast away."

"But is it the only chance?"

"I think you know as well as I. Strong's peculiar line of persuasion has been exercised long enough, I should fancy, to test its chance of success."

"But that is not what you alluded to when you came in," said Trevanion.

"No: what I alluded to is a very different matter, and one which you may think more pardonable, even inasmuch as it is more the fault of the man than of the priest. He really almost put me out of temper an hour ago."

"And you are generally so quiet with him."

"I try to be. Would you believe it?—he told me, with great glee, he had been writing letters to some eight or ten different people, with a view of raking up the delinquencies of the last six years of this Mr. Capel, who is coming to Bickerton Firs."

"Well; but he means well."

"Oh, nonsense! What! throw mud in a man's face, and then tell him it must be washed off before he can be received! That were meaning well, according to you."

"Still, do you know," said Trevanion, "I do not

quite see what he has done wrong; putting aside his especial foible, it seems a judicious thing to do."

"In what way, pray?"

"Why, are not the clergy guardians of the morals of such a parish as this?"

"For which reason you would have them pull every new-comer's character to pieces, and trumpet to the world every indiscretion he has committed for the first quarter of a century of his life! Truly there are few of us who would be safe."

"Trumpet! no. I spoke only of discovering if anything was wrong in a man who comes to move in our innermost circle, and who surely cannot complain that we should ask him to come with clean hands."

"Oh! I spoke of the act as Strong's, and of course of its consequences, as the consequences of such an act on the part of Strong. To make discreet enquiries, with a view to only using the result of those enquiries as circumstances may afterwards render it necessary, is one thing; but to make enquiries for the mere morbid desire of finding a screw loose, and of telling the same to every human being, whom it may not concern, is, in my idea, in every way unworthy of an English priest."

Perhaps Trevanion thought so too, for he did not pursue this branch of the subject; but, as if struck by a new idea, he said—

"But why does the character of this Mr. Capel stand in need of such tender handling, Motcombe? You know something about him, from what you said the other night at Natchetts. Is there anything wrong about him?"

"To the best of my belief, not," answered Motcombe: "but he has not, I think, been the most prudent man in his day. And if a man is to begin a new career, in which fortune has placed him to do much good or the reverse, with all his early indiscretions to start up everywhere in his face, I think folks have no right to complain if he retires from the trial in dudgeon."

"Tell me, what is he like?"

"When he was at Oxford," said Motcombe, "he was the man of his day. He was not a reading man, yet he won the hardest contest of his time: he rode well to hounds, and was a good shot; and yet he took high honours. He was one of those men who seem born to do anything without trying."

"Then he will succeed here?"

"If he resembles what he was, he will succeed against everything, except prejudice. I never knew any one who could do that, without hard struggling and perseverance. And perseverance he has not, for he never required it."

"I suppose he will marry?"

"I should think so: and surely he may pick and choose."

"What are you smiling at?"

"Oh! at some nonsense which just crossed my mind. I was thinking who would be most to his taste: and would it not be a strange thing if Miss Nora Deane, the very girl who hates him in her heart already, for having supplanted her favourite, should attract him?"

"He would hardly have any chance there."

"I don't know; he has an irresistible power of pleasing—that is, had—men as well as the other sex."

"You know nothing of his subsequent life?" asked Trevanion.

"Well, to own the truth, I do know something,—not much, but something: still I know that little accidentally, and as it is not to his discredit, and concerns himself only, I do not, like Strong, think it my duty to make it public property."

"Tell me, do you think he will be an acquisition here?"

"I am sure he will. Look you, Trevanion, under all his careless upper crust there is a deep, sterling, springing well. He is a good Churchman, and it will be well for this parish if he be induced to settle in it. I saw the pure metal in that remark which Percy let drop the other night, about his wishing to be of assistance to that good-for-nothing Wordsworth. Depend upon it, that assistance was of no common order; it was something which with pride he would have accepted himself, had their positions been reversed; something that demanded in turn application, energy, and singleness of purpose,—which Wordsworth has it not in him to give."

"In truth, you make me anxious to see this man: he must be something wonderful."

"Nay, he may have changed, though I do not expect for the worse: such hearts generally preserve something of their original worth."

"How your mind seems to harp on that chance. Men do not change so much as all that in early life."

"Do they not?" said Motcombe, thoughtfully.

Trevanion looked at the speaker, and it struck him, not for the first time, that there was some change here, too. Henry Motcombe was a well-looking young man, very dark, with large, thoughtful blue eyes, which in a woman would have been beautiful, and even in him had a striking effect. His countenance, as a whole, was chiefly characteristic of unruffled repose; his smile, though sweet, was not often called into action, and he would to a stranger, if anything, have appeared to lack that energy which was in reality the chief feature of his daily life. But over all this there was a deep-seated gloom at times, which struck Trevanion as unnatural, and which had occasioned him many times to ask himself whether his friend was not unhappy. Whether so or not, however, this peculiarity had marked Motcombe ever since their acquaintance, and the younger curate had little clue to the reason of it, further than from his own conjectures.

Trevanion himself was of a very different cast, both in mind and appearance. In the former he resembled that earnest, devoted class which are daily swelling the ranks of the Church, with no thought or heart for anything save the calling which they fill. The priest in his higher life was the picture on which his eyes were ever fixed, and though by no means given to extremes in doctrinal or ritual views, no sacrifice, no self-denial, seemed to him to be too great for the practical perfection of his pastoral character. In appearance he was a short, quiet-looking young man, some four years in advance of his real age. In manner he was reserved, and a stranger at first might have thought

him unconciliating, both from this cause and from the blue tint which a strong and closely-shaven black beard gave the lower part of his countenance; he was, moreover, exceedingly near-sighted, which somewhat, in its consequences, added to the distaste which people felt to contracting an intimacy with him. In disposition he was gentle and affectionate, rapidly appreciating good points in the characters of others, and as steadily ignoring the bad ones. He even judged Mr. Strong charitably, when that excellent man put the most indulgent out of patience. Of Henry Motcombe he entertained a species of veneration. The powerful mind—the untiring energy—the appreciation of the beautiful in all that was sacred—the devotion to his Master's work, made him look upon this latter as the pattern of priests. What wonder, then, if regarding this model through the colouring of his own wishes, he invested it with some attribute which it did not possess? Of this mistake we shall know more by-and-bye. At present it is enough to say, that Trevanion attributed Motcombe's settled gloom to some extinguished hope which the latter felt to be incompatible with the higher life of a priest, and which had thus left its mark upon his brow.

"Have you seen any one to-day?" asked Motcombe.

"Old Harbottle has been here this morning," was the reply.

Motcombe shrugged his shoulders: "The old story, I suppose?"

"Yes: he is fussing now about the Apocrypha being read at the daily service."

"And what did you say?"

"Oh, I tried to appease him by shewing him that the clergy desired peace as much as himself."

Motcombe made a gesture of impatience. "That peace and quietness may be overdone with a man like him," he said: "Why did not you tell him that obedience is a clergyman's first duty?"

"He would not have understood it."

"Yes he would, if you had opened the Prayer-book and shewn him that we must do as we are told. And then you might have read him a lesson on obedience on the part of the laity."

"You will only make him angry if you tell him this," said Trevanion: "he will only talk of the wishes of the congregation."

"Well, but Trevanion, it is such capital practice for you," said the other, smiling: "You should ask him whether we were placed here to teach the congregation, or the congregation to teach us."

"You know that you would not do so yourself," said Trevanion: "no one would more avoid a church row than yourself; and one in this parish would end in many families withdrawing from the church."

"'Church row' is an ugly expression, Trevanion, and of course must be avoided. At the same time, let me tell you a fact,—that in nearly every dissension of this sort in the country, where the seceders are really Church-people at heart, it has always ended in their coming back again in time."

"But then they are met half way."

"Not always," said Motcombe: "In some cases a fancied concession has been made, to satisfy the dissentients'—not conscience, for these matters are not

really matters of conscience, call them so as much as people will—but to satisfy the dissentients' *spiritual pride*. But in very many instances not even this is necessary. Let only the clergy be patient."

"But in the case of such a person as Harbottle, with whom people have very little sympathy, but who can be very troublesome, nevertheless?"

"It is just with such people as him that the danger of that concession-system is most apparent: by following it you establish the precedent that every ignorant, self-willed agitator (though I do not think so ill of him as to call him that) is to dictate to the clergy on subjects which they are placed there to teach him upon. Our rules are plain; and there is a remedy against us if we transgress them. But this precedent will go to the extent of making us continually transgress them, at the will of any one who chooses to find his conscience troublesome. I really and sincerely believe that this principle of concession on *all* occasions has done as much harm to the Church as the false brethren who have crept into its ranks. The State, in all truth, has left us little enough discipline as it is; but this system takes away even the shadow of it—the very pretence of it—which, at all events, it is advisable to adhere to, though the reality have disappeared."

"You are no doubt right," said Trevanion; "but every case must be judged by its peculiar circumstances; and you would, I think, be guided by them as much as any other."

"Maybe," said Motcombe, quietly: "I wish, by-the-bye, this Harbottle would not go talking his non-

sense up at Madame d'Aulaincourt's; her views are quite Calvinistic enough as it is, without his propagandism."

"You knew the D'Aulaincourts before you came here, did you not?"

"I made the acquaintance of Madame d'Aulaincourt and her niece last year, at Torquay, where I was curate: Miss d'Aulaincourt was away on a visit."

"How did she come to know you?"

"Miss Repton is a good Churchwoman; and her aunt always consulted her comfort in matters of religion."

CHAPTER VII.

LAMFORD SOCIAL.

Of our amusements ask you? We amuse
Ourselves and friends with country walks and views,
Or take a morning ride, a novel, or the news;
Or seeking nothing, glide about the street,
And so engaged with various parties meet.—CRABBE.

For the benefit of my readers who are not acquainted with that part of the country, Bishops Lamford, or Lamford, as it is the custom of its citizens and of the country-folk to term it, is situate on some rising-ground on the banks of the little river Lamm, which, after regaling the neighbourhood with water-cresses and forget-me-nots, in proper season, falls into the great river Ouse, about three miles off to the east, hard by the thriving woods of Bickerton Firs. The town is a picturesque one to any one entering, and not actually in it. From the south it seems embedded in woodland, and from this side the church, shrouded in its lime-trees, which, thickly studding the churchyard, make it one of the prettiest and shadiest in England, has a particularly pleasing appearance. Once in the town, the ground gently, though almost imperceptibly, rises, till the traveller makes his exit at the northern extremity. Here the road suddenly making a sweep to the west, gives a view of the little valley formed by the bubbling Lamm, and above it of the church, which,

seen from this side, stands on an eminence, with, stretching to its left, the ruins of the old monastery and the large pond or lake beneath it, said once to have supplied fabulous amounts of fish to the table of the abbot or of the bishop, from whom in later years the town took its distinctive appellation. Just here, on the right of the road, are the gates of Natchetts, the estate of Colonel Deane, a fine, erect, but unhappy-looking old man, with nothing to do,—a fate which he is bewailing from morning till night, though the circumstance happens to be in every way his own fault. He is possessed of a wife and a daughter, and one son in the army, at present on service, and his property stretches along the high road for about two miles, where it is bounded by that of Bickerton Firs, the possession of which has formed the subject of the earlier pages of this history. Before arriving at Natchetts, and on the other side of the road, stands a substantially built villa in its own grounds, but with little land attached to it, called, for no ostensible reason, Kemp. It is the residence of Madame d'Aulaincourt, and for situation is the prettiest thing in the place, commanding the best view of the church and of the old monastery, and reaching down to the stream. The fair hand of woman is imprinted on every inch of these fortunate grounds: not a border that does not tell of woman's taste; not a flower that does not proclaim her fostering care and attention; not a bird whose voice does not revel in the liberty and freedom from molestation which her tender permission accords him. This little patrimony of Kemp is one of Colonel Deane's sore points. He considers himself ill-used in

not being able to purchase it. To be sure, he has as much as he can possibly want; but he is annoyed because it commands a better view than that from his own drawing-room windows, although it is by no means probable that, if he had it, he would either pull it down or inhabit it himself. All the property to the east of the town belongs to the Earl of Dunchester, who has not been seen at Lamford within the memory of this generation—preferring Paris, and the society of opera-dancers, to one of the prettiest and most agreeable localities in this kingdom; a dispensation which no one would quarrel with, if he would only have the wisdom just to get rid of his property to some Christian and well-conducted member of society.

But as he will not, we must for further acquaintances go back to the south of the town, where we shall find Mr. Harbottle, of Castle Bank, a well-meaning but injudicious old gentleman, very learned in farming matters, to which he devotes his chief attention, if we, perhaps, except that unfortunate tendency already alluded to, of discovering mismanagement in the mode in which the clergy do their duty. This is undoubtedly a pity, for he is shrewd and quick in other matters; and his failing in this direction would in a parish differently constituted, or in a society that boasted of less harmony within itself, have the effect of producing Church party dissensions,—the most to be regretted in these days, when all Christian labourers mean so well.

Mr. Harbottle's behaviour in this respect amounted to a monomania, and as such excited more amusement than anything else; but still, among the ignorant in

such matters it had a prejudicial effect, and thus at times caused the clergy both trouble and annoyance.

Mr. Harbottle boasted of two sons, one of whom was a *petit-maître*, and affected to be a lady's man, dividing his attentions between Miss Nora Deane and Miss Bella Dillwyn, (of whom we shall hear more anon,) neither of whom probably cared a fig for him. The other was given to field-sports, slang, and tandem-driving, and eschewed gloves and polite society as much as possible. The Miss Harbottles were nice, lady-like girls, not very attractive, but always useful contributors to every little circle of pleasure or amusement, or business, if need be.

Bella Dillwyn was one of the prettiest, merriest, most agreeable little girls in the place; she was the daughter of a retired York attorney, a widower, whose house she took care of, and whose whims she indulged. Her father, old Dillwyn himself, was one of those people who seem to have been billeted upon the world for no ostensible purpose whatever. He wore a stiff white cravat, and always looked supernaturally solemn, especially at parties of pleasure. He was never known to enuntiate any original idea on any subject, one way or the other, and every attempt to draw him out had met with the most calamitous want of success. The old ladies voted him a profound thinker, but Walter Harbottle, the younger, had, probably in allusion to his erect and useless bearing at every little meeting which was held, and to the speechless assiduity with which he handed the cake on those occasions, given him the title, which he ever afterwards bore, of the "Dumb waiter of Bishops Lamford."

Besides this, there was a Mr. Hetherington, a young unmarried man of about nine-and-twenty, who had the temerity to set up as a doctor in this small town, in the teeth of the *prestige* enjoyed by Dr. Crompton, who had pretty well the confidence of the neighbourhood. But no matter,—Hetherington had been born in Lamford, and had buried his father, mother, and three dear sisters in Lamford; all he loved was in Lamford, and boldly and manfully he resolved to work his calling as a doctor in Lamford. And he had already gained ground. Fame, four years before, had preceded him from London as a herald of future promise; certificates of approval had been seen by competent authorities; two or three lucky cures had fallen to his lot; and he had attended *the poor for nothing*. His hopes were centred in the practice of the surrounding neighbourhood a few years hence, which, coupled with the hand of Bella Dillwyn, would leave him nothing to wish for.

Alas! at what cross purposes we are always driving in this world. Just at the time in question, Bella Dillwyn's heart was beating for nobody less than the new curate, Henry Motcombe, who on his side never gave her a thought.

Nor must it be supposed that Hetherington's hopes, as far as his profession was concerned, were without foundation. Dr. Crompton had no kith or kin. He was already advanced in life, and his powers had been at times severely taxed by the requirements of the neighbourhood. He knew, moreover, all about Hetherington and his family, and had ever been well disposed towards the young man,—nay, was even now

inclined to throw business into his hands,—so that, taking all things, the latter had every reason to hope for success in life.

Talking of Bella Dillwyn and Mr. Hetherington has brought us back from Castle Bank to the interior of the town, as both these parties inhabit domiciles in the High-street of Lamford,—a long, bare, unattractive looking road, sprinkled here and there with very substantial-looking buildings, one of which belongs to Mr. Percy, a gentleman of old and good family. Why this gentleman ever took up the profession of attorney-at-law must remain as great a mystery as why, now at the age of seventy, being well to do in the world, he continues to practise in it. He is rather a slow coach, as we have seen already, but is shrewd and painstaking, has a large connexion in the county, among whom he is highly esteemed, and must have amassed money. He has several sons out in the world, and one daughter who will speak for herself in due season. Another of these large houses is inhabited by old Dillwyn and his daughter; another by three Miss Bamptons, the indigenous old maids of the place—and so on. At the end of the High-street is the market-place, a square space, flanked at one side by the churchyard, elevated some feet above the road, whose waving trees vary the dull monotony that ever pervades the square, except on Wednesdays and Saturdays, which are market-days at Lamford. The vicarage is situate behind the church, not far from the old abbey pond, which Mrs. Trentham bewails constantly as injurious to the health of the town. It happens, however, to be nearer the vicarage than the town, and the inhabitants, in a series

of antiquarian fits, have steadily refused to have it removed.

But we must say a few words of the Vicaress and her daughters. At the time of which we speak there were, in all, four of these young ladies, of which the eldest (Miss Mary) dwelt with her father in Rochester, or in one of his other pluralities, while the other three, in company with their mother, in person, took care of the wellbeing of Lamford. That lady herself had certainly very little to do with it, since she confined her labours to talking in a loud, cheery voice of masculine compass to the old women as they came out of church, generally with a view to encouraging them, lest their hearts should wax faint in the journey from thence to their domiciles, distant about one hundred and twenty yards, and to tasting, on soup-days, a quantity of wholesome but very suspicious-looking fluid, as it was in course of preparation for the sick and indigent. Nor, be it observed, do we blame good Mrs. Trentham in this. To her credit be it said, that she lived in the place, spent her money in the place, and taught her daughters to work in the place. If, therefore, she chose just to line her own particular nest in the autumn-time of her life with a little soft comfortable clover, and to sit in it, who is to blame her?

But if *she* reposed, her daughters did not. Clarinda, the second, was a wonder of ubiquity and locomotion. A strange girl she was; plain to an extreme, good-natured to an extreme; made like a ploughboy, but acting as if she were a sylph; heart and soul in every charitable action, but invariably overdoing it. Many things she did which people regretted because of her

manner, but as immediately forgave because of her heart. One of her most distressing foibles was the assumption of an Irish accent, the unctuousness of which she could not catch, any more than she could claim affinity to the people by blood: and it is almost needless to say she might as well have claimed affinity with the King of Oude, as have tried that. This really was unfortunate. Nobody had the least idea what this mannerism portended, and it really got a bore to hear Miss Clarinda talking of "runnun," and "walkun," and "stockuns," and so forth. Nevertheless, she lived among the poor and the sick, taught indefatigably in the schools, and was at the head of every scheme of philanthropy and good-will. It was a common idea among the old ladies of Lamford, that all the young ones had set their hearts upon a husband apiece—a rather puzzling circumstance, inasmuch as gentlemen did not numerically flourish in that locality. But calculation and conjecture were alike at fault for the lucky swain who would mate with Miss Clarinda. Fancy hit upon every one by turns, from the sons of the neighbouring squires to the last newly-arrived curate. But the squires intermarried into neighbouring counties, and the curates found wives, and Clarinda remained single. The old ladies began to think it a bad business,—"Miss Clarinda never would settle." Their last mainstay, their prop, their hope, was that she would captivate Mr. Strong. To be sure, the two were well together. The gentleman was amused at her diligence, her roughness, her accent, and she—did not mind his growls; but somehow Strong was amazingly wide awake, and had been a

bachelor for some fifty years; and we, from our knowledge as the narrator of this tale, rather think—mind, only think—that it all came to nothing.

Sylvia, the third daughter, was so completely the reverse of Clarinda in feature, figure, and manner, that no one would ever have supposed them to be sisters, excepting those who, from long association with them, were enabled to detect that general superficial resemblance which runs through all families, be they ever so unlike. Sylvia was particularly quiet, always speaking in a subdued tone, as if she feared that two such voices as her sister's would be the death of any society. She was above the middle height, graceful in movement, and with small, pretty features, and an agreeable smile, and she eschewed Irishisms. Like her sister, she was diligent among the poor, of whom she had a district allotted to her, but in a quiet, unpretending manner of her own, which, one cannot doubt, made itself felt. The gossips of the place had assigned her as the future property of Henry Motcombe,—her acquaintance with whom, it is almost needless to say, never even reached a courtship.

The youngest, Lucy, was a little girl of thirteen, of whom we shall have little to say, and whose existence it is merely necessary to record. The ages of the two elder ones were thirty and twenty-five respectively.

Having said so much upon the inhabitants of Lamford, as well as upon its own natural beauties, it will be high time to proceed with our tale. It was in this said High-street of Lamford, a dull looking afternoon in the November succeeding Colonel Deane's party,

that Madame d'Aulaincourt, accompanied by her niece and daughter, met Dr. Crompton, who was on horseback, and whose face was pregnant with importance. Some six weeks had elapsed since public curiosity had been piqued respecting the new owner of Bickerton Firs, who had remained so long without visiting his property that people had almost begun to give him up. Madame d'Aulaincourt's anxieties as to his arrival had gone to rest; and Cecile's spirits, after various phases of hope, disappointment, impatience, and indignation at the innocent cause of this perturbation, had been fairly tired out respecting his coming at all.

"What do you think of him?" said the Doctor, speaking from his horse.

"Think of whom?" asked the lady.

"Of Mr. Capel," was the reply.

"How? Is he here?" said Madame d'Aulaincourt, with an expression of terror on her countenance that nearly made the Doctor laugh outright: but he restrained himself, and pointed to the opposite side of the street, where a little lower down a stranger stood talking to Mr. Percy, close at the latter's door.

Of course Cecile's eyes were wide open in that direction in a second, and Frederica's mild countenance was naturally turned the same way.

The person who innocently attracted so much attention was a little above the middle height, slightly but firmly and actively made, and with an independent manner of standing which denoted self-reliance, as well as health. At the time the ladies were regarding him his features were lighted up with an appearance rather of humour than of pleasure. The eyes, the most tell-

ing feature of his face, partook irresistibly of this expression, and even a minute or two afterwards, when that face fell back into what was its wonted cast of look, and a shade of serious thoughtfulness spread over the whole, this expression still seemed to twinkle over his features. He was not handsome, thought Madame d'Aulaincourt, and yet—it was a terribly dangerous countenance. That smile was unfortunately winning; and though there was nothing to strike in it, yet one's attention was drawn towards it in spite of one's self.

"What do you think of him?" said the Doctor.

"My opinion is not necessary," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, somewhat displeased; "he does not seem to differ from other gentlemen."

"Except in being better dressed, better-looking, and more agreeable than the common run," returned the Doctor, with a sly look at Cecile: "He is rather accomplished too, to add to it, eh!"

"I am delighted to hear it," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, with an imploring look, which so clearly belied her words, that the Doctor was nearly off into another laugh. "You have made his acquaintance, then?"

"I went up to Town on Monday on purpose," was the reply; "and a more delightful, agreeable—"

"I wish you would let me have a few words with you in private," said the lady, half beside herself.

"Certainly. Here, you—Tom," calling to a boy that was idling in the road, "lead my horse home, and give him to the groom; and don't ride him—mind."

So saying, the Doctor dismounted; and Madame

d'Aulaincourt, having sent Cecile and Frederica on in front, began:—

"You must think me silly, Doctor Crompton; but your late remarks in presence of my girls either prove me so, or you very indiscreet. What do you know of this man?"

"No harm," said the Doctor, bluntly.

"Do you know any good? or have you profited so little by your experience in the world as to be bent upon introducing into such a society as ours a man of whom you yourself know nothing, and of whom no one else here knows much more?"

"My dear soul," said the Doctor, as if compassionating her weakness, "there is a mistake hidden in every word of your last speech. First of all, I am not going to introduce this gentleman to any one except to my maiden sister. Nor need I: the new lord of Bickerton will require little introduction in Lamford. Nor is it true that I know nothing of Mr. Capel: I only said I knew no harm of him. And, again, the rest of the world here knows a great deal more of him than they do of most strangers whom they receive at their tables."

"What do they know of him?" asked the lady.

"They know that he is a distinguished scholar and a man of fine intellect; one who has travelled much, and who is well spoken of by one of their own clergy, who knows him intimately."

This was a rap for Madame d'Aulaincourt, with whom Motcombe's name was always a passport. But she was not to be so put off.

"But since—Doctor, since? It is more than eight

years since Mr. Motcombe knew him: how has been his character since that time?"

"Now, you will make me cross," said the Doctor, peering at her under his shaggy eyebrows good-humouredly, nevertheless: "It is unlike yourself to judge thus of any man who comes to earn your good-will with that of others. He has not been a prudent man, Madame d'Aulaincourt,—that is, prudent in his own behalf,—and he has had to pay the penalty of a hard and toilsome life. I know how he has done this, and where he has been; and I repeat I know no harm of him. Won't you take my word for it; won't you give that credit to me, so old and tried a friend, which you would willingly give to Mr. Motcombe, the young parson?"

Madame d'Aulaincourt felt a little ashamed of herself, and perhaps was not sorry to hear the Doctor speak so out on the subject. "Oh! I am satisfied now," she said, good-humouredly: "You must allow me the indulgence due to a mother on such a subject. It is not that I have any right to fear: God blessed me with a good and honourable husband, and doubtless will extend the same kind providence to my girls; but when I look around and see the wretchedness that ensues from matches with men of whom the world '*knows no harm*'—"

This speech very nearly overcame the Doctor. "Bless my heart, if she is not getting on," he said to himself: "as if the man must propose to that young madcap Cecile, or to that poor sick girl, out of all the girls in the place." But that was not the point which tickled him most: it was her opinion of her own mar-

riage, which in his remembrance had been about the maddest transaction which ever a headstrong girl rushed at, or even an indulgent father was fooled into. He mastered his emotions, however, as the novelists say, and observed with much gravity, "On every point in the matter it appears to me you are hasty. Mr. Capel may not be inclined to marry, or to choose a wife from the beauties of Lamford; he may not even be inclined to go much into society; or, what is more probable than all, he may have some young heart beating for him already, and waiting for the better days which have just dawned for him."

"Oh! tell me that: I shall be so glad."

"Nay, nay; hasty again. I only say any of these contingencies *may* be. You have, at all events, no reason to be uneasy."

"You have relieved me immensely," said the lady: "You think, then, we may all safely receive him in Lamford?"

"I am certain of it: and as a proof, I am going to ask him in to dinner with me now. He promised he would come the first day he came down; so let us be turning; and see, now, there he is, coming this way."

They soon met, when Mr. Capel greeted the latter so gracefully and in such pleasing tones, that Madame d'Aulaincourt would have been glad to have known him at once. But the Doctor was determined to pay her off for her want of charity, and made no movement towards the gratification of that wish, plainly expressed in her countenance as it was—much to her

discomfiture, and the great indignation of Cecile, who voted the Doctor ill-bred; and, indeed, to the perplexity of Mr. Capel himself, who, like all persons of keen humour, had quickly discovered a freemasonry in the latter young lady's twinkling, restless eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

DREAMS.

. . . . Life is not as idle ore,
But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom,
To shape and use. . . . . TENNYSON.

Of course, Mr. Capel's arrival revived all the curiosity which had been roused respecting him by the issue of Admiral Ayscough's will, and all intelligence of his smallest movement was revived and canvassed most diligently by a certain set in the community. Not that he did anything unlike other mortals, but circumstances had invested him with a certain interest, and he was the talked-of, and the thought-of, too, under more than one roof and in more than one chamber. For the first week or ten days, however, after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, very little was seen of him: he was busily engaged in making himself acquainted with every nook of his property, with becoming personally known to his tenants, and mastering every detail connected with his title to Bickerton. Like everything else which he did, he went also heart and soul into the different systems of farming which were practised in that country, though hitherto he had had but a

limited knowledge of such matters. The house at Bickerton Firs had lately been fitted up, at some expense, by the deceased Admiral, who, however, had never inhabited it. Not much had to be done, therefore, in that way. But the internal regulation of the interior opened a wide field for occupation. The taste of a refined scholar had little in common with that of a weather-beaten sailor; and the stocking and arranging of a first-rate library at once became the leading thought of the former's heart. Indeed, there was plenty to do and to think of; and he seemed in need of some distraction. Though animated in society—light-hearted with others—he seemed as anxious to avoid the crowd as they were to get hold of him. The Doctor, after the first two or three days, did not quite know what to make of him: solitary rides and drives seemed to be the delight of the man who, but a few hours ago, appeared born only for society. Was he unhappy? thought the Doctor; or was he shy? or was his animation all put on? "I must watch him."

The fact is, Herbert Capel's was one of those high-toned dispositions which are not uncommon in the world, but which are yet not so common as to be readily understood. Naturally joyous, careless, and sensitive, he had paid the penalty of an imprudent temper, and had felt it. Throughout a life sometimes penurious, often laborious, continually disappointing,—he had longed for prosperity as for some haven that would bring rest from care. It came one fine morning, and so suddenly as to produce a shock,—the extent of it was even yet hardly realised. But one thing he had already learnt to know—that it had not brought hap-

piness. To a disposition naturally indolent, though burning with energy when roused or driven to exertion, there was certainly relief in not being obliged to work for existence; but there was a dead fear of uselessness from the tendency to this very fault, which began to creep over him. There was also a sensation that his place was not naturally there—that by a freak of fortune, as it is commonly called, or rather by a distortion of those equable and seldom-changing laws which make poverty the inheritance of the poor and riches the inheritance of the rich, he had been placed where he was; an idea that, like the servant in the Eastern story, by means of an opiate he had been made for one day to take his master the Caliph's place, and that though he accepted the deceit, and played the part, he knew all along that he was not the Caliph, but the poor interloper, after all. Again, there was the bitter sense—bitter to a Christian heart, not long before enlightened to the blots and stains within—that he did not deserve, in the very meanest degree, this sign of Omnipotent beneficence. And so, with a heart not sad, but bewildered, he used gently to canter across the broad glades of his new domain, mournful and amazed. And then he would think of the long past,—his dead parents, his brothers and sisters in India, oceans away, and he *alone;* and then of every hour of that long seven years since when he made himself alone. "Oh! how long!" trembled over his heart—and then succeeded the days of his struggle—the few weeks he had of joy, two years and a half back. Oh, what joy! gone, gone, gone! and he alone! Two years and a half ago,

what would he not have given for one-twentieth part of the bounty which Providence now showered in his lap: but not now, not now. Why not? We shall see by-and-bye why not.

In all the scenes of a chequered life, prosperity is often the saddest, although we know it not till it comes. For it is then we look back on our days of trial with affection and with yearning, perhaps because the draughts of present joy are anything but satisfying—perhaps because joy of any sort here below consists in nothing which is utterly free from trouble. And yet he did not give way to these thoughts. At times he would try and drown them in contemplation of the great work which Providence had marked out for him to do: in truth, he only entertained them for the purpose of finding out more thoroughly what was passing within him. Great work, did we say? Who has not a great work in these days to perform, that has the responsibilities of rank and fortune cast upon them? But even this contemplation would sometimes bring him back to the old point from which he had tried to wean his thoughts—bewilderment at the change. It was ever this:—"I, who wanted but a little of this a short time ago, do not know what I would do now that I have my wishes; and far more than what I wished then." Perhaps loneliness, too, had some share in these feelings, though not to the extent that people would imagine. That he was alone had been his own choice, and the result of the course of life he had deliberately chosen; indeed, had Heaven blessed him with wife and children, his was a character that would have ever required some sort of solitude. But

still he wanted something besides his thoughts, at times, to counsel, suggest, and approve—yes, approve. In the work which his clear, vigorous mind saw was before him, he felt he could have embarked better if he had some one to approve. Not the world—he was too unselfish, as well as too experienced in its deceits, to want the praise of men—but the approval of some one who knew his inmost soul as perfectly as his own conscience—who would take pride and pleasure in the work as well as he,—one who would be part of his existence, even of his very self.

"Surely this might have been," will those of our readers say who have cast their eyes across the first three pages of this history. True; and so it doubtless would have been, had Bickerton Firs claimed him for her master then; and had something else happened, which did not happen, as these pages will still further disclose, it might have been even now. But as, in nearly every man's life, his success or sorrow depends upon the accidents of a few days or hours, so was it here. These little events are not, however, the moving cause in such matters, though we, in our puny wisdom, are apt to attribute to their working what are really the mighty results of some Almighty scheme. Nor were they so in this case. What ruined Herbert Capel's peace now—what made him careless of prospects which in early life might, and probably would, have led him to greatness and to fame, was *pride*, that common inheritance of man's early fall!

But no more of this at present. Searching as suffering had made him of his own faults, he was not aware as yet of the full existence of this one. Few of

us are. It is the most delusive of any to which we are subject. Nor did he repine, therefore, that that was past which would have invested his present fortune with a halo of glory: but he wished that it had not been so, that was all: that it was so he did not regret. He gave a dreamy sigh over the fact, and dismissed it.

He had been some distance off, to see some cottages which his agent said demanded repair, when he could get rid of some disreputable tenants of them, as well as to form his own opinion of the tenants themselves, and was debating whether he should return home by the park, or take thither some of the many lanes with which the country abounded, when the rich voice of Dr. Crompton, who was mounted on a strong, sedate-looking old hunter, addressed him.

"I was just thinking of committing a trespass on your lands, Mr. Capel."

"Pray don't let me interfere with so truly British an intention," said Herbert, good-humouredly: "I am going that way: come along with me."

"Nay, but the outrage will be divested of all its wrong if you are with me."

"Well, then, take leave and license for this once, and defer the *tort* till another day; by that time I shall be able to direct a keeper to blow you up."

"You talk as if you were a lawyer," said the Doctor, as they entered the park: "Have you ever directed your attention that way?"

"Oh! I have learnt a smattering of a great many things in my day; but it is all superficial,—I know nothing well."

"The world will not allow that," replied the old man: "some people learn by a glance and a question, where others have to use patient application."

"Yes; but then they learn to good purpose, and can turn their learning to account. Mine has been a very brilliant education, but, for these days, anything but a useful one."

"You are trying to turn me from my last remark,' said the Doctor, with a smile, "and I think you are right: there is nothing to my mind so ill-bred as to compliment a sensible man."

"Thank you for the hint," said Herbert, laughing; "I shall know how to keep out of disgrace with you."

"By-the-bye, Mr. Capel, *you* will be getting into disgrace with every one in Lamford if you don't mend your manners."

"In what have I offended now?"

"You have been here a fortnight, and only know ten people in the place."

"Well! whose fault is that? The people won't call upon me."

"I like that," said the Doctor: "All the best and most attractive people in the place are of the other sex, and you expect them to come and call on a young bachelor."

"Well, then, why don't you ask them all to your house, and me to meet them?"

"My dear old maiden sister would never stand that," said the Doctor: "but I'll tell you what—I will put up some one else to do that same instead. Let me see—Colonel Deane will be the man."

"Oh, no! pray: any one but him."

"Why? do not you like him? He is considered rather a fine fellow here."

"And so he is, doubtless, when you are used to his peculiarities, which I am not,—yet. He wasted a great deal of his own valuable time yesterday, as well as of my patience, in expatiating upon his miseries in having nothing to do; and rather frightened me in consequence."

"You mean he is a bit of a bore. True—when he is by himself, that is so; but you will like him better on acquaintance. I should have thought his daughter's bright eyes might have stood his friend."

"Too scornful, Doctor, by half: besides, they shine for some one else, do they not?"

"Don't believe any of that nonsense, whatever you do: it is not fair to the young lady. In the first place, her father would sooner see her in her grave than marry her to Edward Wordsworth; and in the second, she is too sensible to have more than a friendship for him herself."

"I am sure I beg her pardon: but anyhow, she is not to my taste."

"That is quite another thing. What do you think, then, of Miss Dillwyn? But why ask?—you know none of these young ladies, except by sight, which is equivalent to not knowing them at all."

"Miss Dillwyn," said Herbert, reflectively: "Is that not the pretty *riante* little girl that I see so much with the Miss Trenthams?"

"The same."

"Well, then, she would be worth cultivating if she resembled her father."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Doctor, catching the idea in a moment: "What, you know him then?"

"To see him is to respect him," said Herbert: "But seriously, Doctor, there is one quarter where you might introduce me: you have not hit upon my particular weakness yet."

The Doctor looked puzzled. "Who can he mean?" thought he.

All this time they were trotting slowly across the park, under the bracing influence of a clear, soft December day. As Herbert spoke these last words, he turned his clear, meaning eyes full on the Doctor's face, and kept them there, searching and taking in his every look. There was something so telling in these features, that the Doctor, old worldling as he was, felt their influence.

"I wish you would not stare at me in that way," he said, half abruptly: "if you look at our young fair ones so, I don't know that I shall be right in introducing you anywhere."

"Pooh!" said Herbert: "I can't help my eyes. I am only enjoying your perplexity."

"Why not remove it, then?"

"Well, I will," replied Herbert: "Talking of eyes, there are a pair here in Lamford which tell the inmost soul in a manner such as I never met. She must be very young."

"Surely not—"

"You might have introduced me the day I came down here, but you strangely forgot your manners, or mamma was afraid of me, which I strongly suspect to be the fact."

"Ma'amselle, by Jove!" said the Doctor, with a whistle: "What! captivated by the *fleur de lys?*"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that the young lady is French by the father's side."

"And why shouldn't she be?"

"No reason, of course; only I thought you were too thoroughly English to have fallen there."

"Stuff! there is no falling or captivating either," said Herbert: "I only said that there were eyes there more to my taste—eyes that speak; mind, not eyes that are made to speak, like those of the accomplished London world, but eyes that speak in spite of themselves. But there is another reason why I wish for an introduction there. The mother—what is her name?"

"Madame d'Aulaincourt."

"Well, the mother, Madame d'Aulaincourt, has something so well-bred and so gentle with her, that she reminds me of a mother whom I shall never see again."

The Doctor was silent for a few minutes, for he felt the beauty of the association. Then, to put an end to a silence which might become awkward, he said—

"I am sure I shall be happy to introduce you at Kemp when you please. Shall it be this afternoon?"

"No, not this afternoon," was the answer; "I have promised Harry Motcombe to call with him at the Vicarage, and I want also to become acquainted with the other curates. Shall you have a spare moment to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, that will do famously: I generally go there

about twelve, to see Miss Repton, Madame d'Aulaincourt's niece. If you will call at my house a little before that hour, we will go up together."

"Thanks," said Herbert: "Meantime, as we are at home, you must come in and take some lunch: I'll take no refusal; you must come in and see what I am doing there. See, here too is a nice piece of turf for a gallop to wind up with." And he threw his own horse into the required pace with such vivacity, that it struck a corresponding chord in the Doctor's sober charger's breast, who left his master no choice but to follow.

Herbert's animal being younger and higher mettled, got at once a little in advance, and the Doctor had leisure to admire the dash and buoyancy which characterized the rider's whole figure and bearing. He sat his horse so carelessly, and yet, withal, as if he were a part of him—his features lighted up, as if enjoying the exercise, and his eyes full again of that old humour —all rendered him, in the Doctor's eyes, one of the most agreeable and attractive young men he had ever met. "And with it all," thought the old gentleman, as they rode up to the entrance of the house, "he is such a thorough gentleman."

The house at Bickerton was a modern-built house, not long thoroughly repaired and improved upon by the old Admiral, who had a very good notion of comfort and luxury, though his taste led him rather into eccentricities at times. Herbert had to congratulate himself that the old man had not rushed too lavishly into these in the mansion which had fallen to his own lot, and with this consolation on his mind, he was but too glad to

pass over the vandalism displayed in the furniture and internal arrangements of the house. There were only two important changes which he conceived it desirable at present to make. Those were the re-arranging and hanging of some valuable pictures which the Admiral had left, and which had been placed with the most admired disregard both to light and to combination by some *factotum* to whom he had intrusted that office; the other was the completely refurnishing and arranging that room which was to be his library and his own especial apartment. The old room which had been fixed on by the Admiral for this office, though snug, was small and confined. Herbert chose that which had hitherto borne the title of breakfast-room. It was a large light apartment with a south-eastern aspect, affording immense resources for the object he had in view. The workmen who had been put upon this room had only partially finished it. All the panelling and new designing was finished, and the Doctor was able fully to appreciate the cast of mind which the new occupant had brought to bear on the work. A few words of explanation, too, here and there, besides some well put reasons why a painting in one of the other rooms, which had hitherto had the reputation of being an original, was in reality only a copy, disclosed as much as the history of his life could have done, the delicate cultivation and refinement which that mind had received. And with it all, everything that he said, and did, was said and done so well, that the Doctor could not help reflecting, though such thoughts must appear very silly and premature in so old and experienced a man, that if anything came of

this attraction towards the warm-hearted and bright-eyed Cecile, Madame d'Aulaincourt was among the most fortunate of mothers.

Meantime, luncheon was placed in the dining-room, whither the two repaired.

"Have you seen Percy to-day?" said Herbert.

"No," said the Doctor, with his mouth full: "his daughter was to be home last night."

"Daughter! You don't mean to say that Percy has a daughter?"

"To be sure he has, and a very fair specimen of one she is, too. I forgot that you had not seen her."

"Like him?"

"No. Like him! I should think not. And that reminds me you will be pleased with her. She is an exceedingly clever girl, and very accomplished, so that you will have much in common,—and was very handsome."

"Was?"

"Well! Is still to my mind: but some think she is a little *passée*. She must be your age, at least."

"U--m! How is it that she has never married?"

"I am sure I don't know," said the Doctor; "you must ask her that yourself."

"A likely question for me to ask. Stay, there was one family I wished to know of. Did you ever hear of the Neelds of Bolder?"

"To be sure, they live nearly five miles from here; but Lamford is their post-town."

"The daughters are very handsome, are they not?"

"That is, as tastes go: one of them passes for a

beauty. But you will see them at the ball. Of course you will go to the ball?"

"To be sure, if it is expected,—though balls are not much in my line. When is it?"

"The first or second week in January. It is one of the best balls in the county: people come from St. Neot's, Huntingdon, and from Cambridge, too. Everyone expects you will be there. Lamford, you know, is sadly in want of gentlemen. Can't you bring any friends?"

"I am afraid not. The fact is, I do not possess very many: one of my best, I may say very best, I expected would have spent Christmas with me, but he has undertaken a sick college friend's duty for him for six months, to enable the latter to spend the winter in Lisbon, and therefore cannot be here before April."

"How provoking! He will miss the best time of year. I'll trouble you for some more of that raised pie; it is excellent. Had you been riding far when I met you?

"No, I had only been down to Lamm's Ferry, to see what can be done with those cottages. The people seem to be dreadfully uncared for there. I must speak to Motcombe about it."

"No use," said the Doctor; "that is in Mr. Strong's district."

"Well, but can't any curate take cognisance of what goes on all over the parish?"

"They manage it their own way," was the reply: "Motcombe, of course, will tell you what to do."

"Tell me, too," said Herbert, "who on earth is Mrs. Martin? I find her flung in my teeth all over

my estate. I fully expect to hear that I may not drain some field I have my eye on, because she would not approve of it."

"Did you hear of her then at Lamm's Ferry?"

"I hear of her everywhere. Mrs. Martin said this,—and she knew: she was cousin to the late Lord Melbourne."

"That is it," said the Doctor; "that splendid connection carries her everywhere as an uncontrovertible authority. Mrs. Martin was mother of one of our late curates, who did all her son's work in the parish, and a great deal more, until he one day, ungratefully, and rebelliously, determined to marry a wife. You never saw such an indefatigable woman. She acquired immense influence among the poor, who venerate her memory, and have instituted games in her honour."

"She must have been a considerable nuisance."

"So she was, at times; but she was a good-intentioned, single-hearted person, who meant good to everyone, though she sometimes gave a little offence by her way of shewing it."

"And where may she be now?"

"The last I heard of her was at Weymouth, unreconciled to her son."

"But she seems to have affected not only the very poor, but even the better classes in Lamford. I had her opinion thrown in my face yesterday, in a shop, on the simple question of a pair of gloves."

"I have no doubt; and you will even hear her quoted by people of a better class than that. My sister makes her a diurnal dose to me on some subject. And I used to hear even Madame d'Aulaincourt men-

tion her name as an authority, until her little daughter, Miss Cecile, your friend, turned the name into such ridicule that she was obliged to desist."

"Bravo, Cecile!" said Herbert; "I am sure we shall be capital friends."

"Well, I am sure I hope so," said the Doctor, rising: "and now for my patients, who will be thinking I have forgotten them."

CHAPTER IX.

THE VICARAGE.

Quenching my familiar smile
With an austere regard of control.—SHAKSPEARE.

IT is possible that Herbert's intended visit to the Vicarage this afternoon got wind, or else the Miss Trenthams must have been much struck at the extreme solicitude to enquire after their welfare on the part of their friends which evinced itself on this particular day. If our conjecture be right, it is perfectly clear that, at all events, the hour of his intended call remained undiscovered, as visitors continued pouring in to the Vicarage during several hours; and when at last he was announced, attended by Henry Motcombe, Miss Dillwyn and the two young Harbottles were the only ones among them who had hit upon the auspicious moment, or who had had the courage and the patience to await his arrival. There was nothing very remarkable, to be sure, in Walter Harbottle's (the exquisite's) presence there, as he always contrived to be near Miss Dillwyn, if he could find the rhyme of an excuse for dancing attendance upon her. But of his brother the same cannot be said. He was not a lady's man, as he himself avowed; and his making a call on the present occasion can only be ascribed to his desire

to scrape an acquaintance with a man who had been mentioned to him as a crack shot, and as being able to ride well to hounds. Anyhow, it was a remarkable event, and deserved to be inscribed as such in Miss Clarinda's journal.

Mrs. Trentham was not in the room when Herbert entered, and therefore the introduction to the two young ladies was got over in a tolerably easy and unconstrained manner; Miss Clarinda being hearty, sincere, but rather vulgar,—Miss Sylvia quiet, a little shy, and undoubtedly pretty. With Miss Dillwyn, however, this was a much more agreeable process, that young lady having a sunny, cheerful little manner of her own, which always set every one at their ease.

Miss Clarinda commenced the conversation with a slight fiction about the wonderful improvements she heard the new-comer was making at Bickerton, which she characterised as "splend*ud*;" it being the fact that she only took it for granted that, as a young man just come into a large fortune, he would of course make them. She added also much to the force of her remarks by addressing him as "Mr. Cap*ul*."

Herbert quietly disclaimed the imputation, and set her right as to what he was doing; while Motcombe was kindling a small conflagration in Mr. Walter Harbottle's breast, by referring Miss Dillwyn to some very innocent joke which had passed between them on the last occasion of their meeting; of which joke he, Walter, was in a state of profound ignorance. Lester Harbottle meantime beguiled his leisure until the opportunity for his striking in upon the conversation

successfully should arrive, by sucking a very large ring, which encumbered the fourth finger of his right hand. Then ensued that beat-the-bush sort of conversation which is sometimes carried on between strangers, for want of something better, as to the beauty of the country, the wetness of the autumn, the stupidity of Lamford, and the dulness of society in general; the first of which Herbert very willingly allowed, and the last three of which he combated deprecatingly, as being a person of circumscribed experience; but which the girls, nevertheless, as unhesitatingly and decidedly affirmed. Matters were progressing in this rather unsatisfactory manner, when the thoughts of the party received a new impulse in the advent of the Rev. Mr. Strong, who appeared at this juncture, apparently with a view of paying *his* respects to the family. He was a bald-headed old gentleman, of rather good-humoured countenance, the effect of which, however, was much marred by a pair of very powerful spectacles, which gave him the appearance of glaring at every one he regarded. In the present instance he appeared to have got himself into a tremendous heat about something, which put it out of his power to proceed with the object of his visit; for having been introduced and having seated himself, he set to work to regard the assembled company, without seeming to have any ostensible idea of what brought him there. The silence was broken by the ever-ready Clarinda—

"You seem out of breath, Mr. Strong: what have you been doing?"

"Looking after you," replied Strong, with a growl.

"After me? what for?"

"Why, I wanted to get into that cottage in Spong-lane, and Monkton says you've got the key."

"No I have not; I left it with his wife. But I'll get it for you directly we go out."

"I don't care about it now," said Strong, shortly: "As I could not afford to waste time, we broke open the door." He shewed signs of placability at this point, as taking the bull by the horns was his particular accomplishment, and he was proud of it.

"That will be expensive, will it not?" said Miss Dillwyn.

"Of course some one will have to pay for it," said Strong: "I know I shan't;"—and he was placable again, at the thought of his firmness.

"Oh! we will manage about it," said Clarinda, not perhaps relishing this conversation before Herbert, and glancing uneasily at Henry Motcombe, who was paying no attention to what was passing.

"Did your mother take my advice about the soup?" asked Mr. Strong.

"I rather think not, Mr. Strong," replied Clarinda: "she flatters herself that she knows more about soup than any one in the county."

"You are a relative of Motcombe's, I think?" said Strong, turning abruptly to Herbert.

"Not the remotest," answered the latter, somewhat startled at the confidence with which the conjecture was hazarded.

"Dear me!" said Strong; "some one told me so, I am sure." And he turned round and glared at Lester, as if he were the guilty person. But that worthy con-

tinuing to operate on his ring as before, only mumbled out, "It war'nt me."

The entry of Mrs. Trentham at this point rendered it necessary to shelve this doubtful question for the present. She was a fine old lady, rather lofty in her demeanour, and with a keen sense of her position in the place, as the Vicar's wife, which was very gratifying. Everybody paid her much deference; and the process of getting her to her seat strongly resembled the scene that ensues in the Crown Court when one of her most gracious Majesty's Judges of Assize takes his seat upon the bench for the day, — everybody rising, very little speaking, a good deal of bowing, and the old lady sitting down with much rustling of her skirts, after which the attendant company did likewise.

After a pause, Mrs. Vicar expressed the pleasure conferred on the country generally by Mr. Capel's coming to reside among them: a sentiment she would have given vent to if it had been any one else but Mr. Capel. She then proceeded to cross-examine him as to his sporting propensities; when the following very unsatisfactory replies, in Lester Harbottle's eyes, were elicited.

"Do you hunt, Mr. Capel?"

"No; I do not intend to hunt."

"You used to hunt?"

"How did she know that?" thought Herbert. "I used to hunt; but I have discontinued it for several years."

"Not hunt, with such opportunities?—such fine packs of hounds near; and with your horses, too!"

"I have no horses at present."

"That was a pretty little piece of stuff you were on yesterday," said Lester, relinquishing his ring.

"You allude to the horse I was riding," answered Herbert: "that belongs to a friend of mine; I am keeping it for him till he comes down."

"You'll want some horses, I suppose?" said Lester.

"Yes; I must have a couple of good backs."

"Well, I can put you up to a good thing in that way, if you—"

"Oh, pray! Mr. Lester Harbottle, don't commence on horses and dogs before us," said Mrs. Trentham, quite forgetting that she had originated the conversation herself. "Shall you shoot, Mr. Capel?"

"Yes, I shall shoot."

"A charming recreation, but cruel."

Herbert gave a general assent.

"I don't think it is a bit more cruel than killing a sheep," said Strong, sententiously.

"Oh, Mr. Strong!" said the old lady, without heeding in the least his last speech, "have you heard anything of that poor old Robson this morning?"

"Yes; she is all right."

"I expected as much: I sent her something last night which I thought would set her up."

Strong made no reply to this, perhaps not being able to trust his own powers of assenting to the position; but, in his old way, turned again abruptly to Herbert:—

"I see you attend the daily service regularly. It will do a great deal of good—such an example."

"Attend the daily service!" cried Mrs. Trentham,

who having thus accidentally got her visitor into the church, which she considered her own particular freehold, resolved now to keep him there, or, at all events, on the subject of churches in general. "That is very good of you. Such a long way to come, too."

"The distance is nothing to me," said Herbert; "but I find the hour, nine o'clock, very inconvenient."

"Would you have it earlier, or later?"

"I would have both, if it were possible; if not, certainly earlier—half-past seven, or eight."

"Nobody would come," said Strong, with a growl.

"The few that come as it is would surely make the experiment worth trying. You only get the idlers now: those who work for their bread cannot come."

"The shopkeepers won't come," said Strong.

"Have you given them a fair trial?" was the rejoinder: "It does appear to me, that with the strong, indirect influence which could be brought to bear upon the tradesmen in such a place as this, a sufficient number might be induced to give the scheme their countenance, and there would be plenty found to follow."

"What say you to trying it, Mr. Strong?" said Motcombe.

But this looked like dictating to the clergy, and Strong was on his high horse in a moment. So he only replied by snorting, looking very red, and asking Miss Dillwyn after her father.

But Mrs. Trentham was on the subject of churches, and she forthwith began an archæological history of

Lamford Church, from which she diverged to Huntingdon Church, and then to Peterborough Cathedral. Having engaged her listeners' attention to this point, she proceeded to the subject of towers and spires, to which latter she applied the term steeples. There was a wonderful steeple at St. Neot's. Had Mr. Capel seen the steeple at Coventry? Who was it that had told her there was a very curious steeple at Newmarket?—was it Mr. Harbottle?—perhaps Mr. Lester Harbottle."

"Oh, no! Mrs. Trentham, it could not have been me," said Lester: "If I told you, it must have been about a steeple*chase;* there are some twenty of them about Newmarket every year."

This answer produced a general laugh, and drew Herbert's attention more particularly to the speaker. He was a fine, active-looking young man, with a remarkably well-meaning countenance and kindly blue eye; but with that raffish appearance which in some people denotes slang, but which with him meant nothing worse than an undue predilection for horses, dogs, and the sports of the field.

"What a pity!" thought Herbert: "I wonder if this is only the result of careless training? It would be a fine thing to try and bring him to think of serious aims."

But by this time Mrs. Trentham was again in full swing, on the subject of Mr. Motcombe, who had said something to excite the old lady's tendency to be facetious.

"Have you heard, Mr. Capel, how your friend Mr. Motcombe came to be set down as a Tractarian?"

"No," said Herbert, trying to appear interested; though he happened to detest anything like levity on these subjects: "How was it?"

"After Mr. Motcombe had preached once or twice here, I happened to meet a very poor old woman of my acquaintance coming out of church, and I thereupon asked her how she liked our new curate. 'Why, Mum,' was her reply, 'I am afeard he is afflicted with Roomanism.' 'Rheumatism, my good woman!' said I, 'not he: it is only such old folks as you and I that are afflicted with that; and he is young and hearty.' And it turned out that the poor old thing meant Romanism."

"Why, who could have put such stuff into her head?" said Herbert.

"That is just what I say, Mr. Cap*ul*," said Clarinda: "Some one must have put her up to it."

"That is nothing to what happens sometimes here," interposed Mr. Strong: "the people in this place are visited with discoveries on the ground of Popery quite as remarkable for their originality as their absurdity. It was only last winter that a rather bright churchwarden of ours detected us burning three tallow-candles in the vestry. He actually made a representation to the vicar about it, as a popish practice; and the Doctor came down, I do believe, with an idea that he should find them burning before some doll in a niche."

"The governor is rather tiresome at times, too, is he not, Mr. Strong?" said Lester, in allusion to his own parent.

"Oh, he ought to know better," said Strong: "he

talks now of getting himself made churchwarden next year."

"By all means let him," said Motcombe, quietly: "the duties of churchwarden are very clearly defined."

Strong was about to rejoin something about his making himself disagreeable, but was either restrained by the presence of his son, or by Herbert and Motcombe's rising to take leave.

All the gentlemen found themselves together in the street, which enabled Herbert to ask Lester Harbottle to come and shoot over his estate on the following Monday, thereby gladdening the young man's heart, and laying *en train* a little plan he had formed for seeing what was beneath his rough exterior.

While they were walking down the street, Herbert again started the subject of the spiritual destitution of Lamm's Ferry, an opinion in which both the parsons fully concurred, and which Motcombe said that Strong's diligence in opening a room there for divine service on Sunday, had done much to remove. But this was not sufficient for Herbert. Nearly all the inhabitants at Lamm's Ferry—a dirty, straggling, populous hamlet on the banks of the river Ouse—were his tenants, and in spite of Mr. Strong's exertions, their state at present might be simply described by the term "godless." The room was certainly an advantage, but more to the immediate neighbourhood,—for Lamm's Ferry was very central—than to the inhabitants themselves, who were mostly in a blissful state of callousness to any religious influence at all, and who therefore did not much avail themselves of

the boon conferred. "Could not," he asked, "something be done towards getting a resident curate in the place? He would supply a house: and he thought there need be no apprehension about stipend, if the matter could be managed."

Strong was all ears in a moment. Arranging such a matter was just in his line. He would see about it at once. If Mr. Capel would authorize him, he would write to the Vicar that very evening. Such a proposition was worthy of Mr. Capel's enlarged and liberal mind. And being authorized thereto, off he went in a state of great glory and much excitement.

The two others, meantime, strolled to Motcombe's lodgings, which were situate at the far end of the town, calling on the way at Trevanion's, who, however, was not within.

The afternoon was cold and frosty, and Herbert lingered in Motcombe's parlour, warming his hands. He had tried to induce the latter to come back and dine with him; but it being Advent, and the church services heavy, Motcombe complained of having much labour to devote to his sermons. He therefore excused himself. "You are well-placed here, Motcombe, I think," said Herbert, after a pause.

"Very," was the reply: "you know that Dr. Trentham was an old friend of my father's?"

"Besides being your very special patron at college, eh?"

"Well, I don't know," said Motcombe; "I think he was just as much a patron of yours."

"Not he. Of course he was civil to me, because I was lucky enough to tumble into an University scho-

larship, which was all to the honour and glory of the college. But you were a weakness of his."

"It must have been a weakness, indeed, for I brought no honour and glory to the place, or to him, or to anyone else."

"Don't say that, for your presence and its results here deny the assertion. You are to have a living, are you not?"

"Yes, and a very good one when it falls vacant,—Market Roden, in Nottinghamshire: it is in my uncle's gift."

"Truly our lot is cast in a fair ground," said Herbert: "you know, perhaps, that I have a living, too to give, attached here to Bickerton."

"Yes, so I understand. Have you any views respecting it?"

"I had: and I may tell you, for there is no fear of your thinking that I seek praise at your hands. You know this young Wordsworth, whose claims to this property my good fortune so completely disposed of?"

"I know something of him."

"Well, I thought it was a sore disappointment to him, and I cast about for a plan to recompense him. He complains of being misjudged in the world, and as being set down as a profligate, when really his greatest fault has only amounted to weakness. Here was a good opening. I offered, through Percy, that if he would devote himself to the ministry, qualifying himself by a steady life, and by application for it, I would keep him this living."

"You did?" said Motcombe, his face lighting up with pleasure.

"And I would have done more: I would have rebuilt the parsonage-house, seen to the schools, and have set the parish in order for him. So that if he were really attached to this Miss Deane, what a pretty future was open to him."

"You are a good fellow, Capel," said Motcombe, feelingly.

"I remembered," returned Herbert, "how I once was misjudged and aspersed, and I thought, what would I have not given for such an opening as this!"

"You were reserved for better things. But what did Wordsworth say?"

"Oh! he simply behaved uncivilly, that was all."

"Rather disheartening, after such an offer."

"No; I did not find it so: if the offer was the result of a proper feeling, as I hope it was, I could well afford to put up with that. No; I did not care much about it. There is no hurry: he may think differently of it now, if he chooses; I shall take no other steps respecting it at present."

"How old is the present incumbent?"

"Percy said, about sixty."

"I think you are altered, Capel," said Motcombe, after a pause, during which he had been regarding him attentively: "I did not perceive it at first; but yes! you are certainly changed."

"No doubt," replied Herbert; "we all change, be it ever so little, or the change ever so gradual. I believe I am very much changed: my mind and views at least are, and the countenance and bearing are but the mere *indices* of these."

"Externally, I do not see it," returned the Curate;

"though I will acknowledge that your opinions and manner of speaking are those of a man who has been obliged to think, perhaps, against his will."

Herbert smiled.

"Yes, I say that not so much because I know of the existence of such compulsion, which of course I do—we all do—as from a remembrance of the days when you never did so,—of the days when all was impulse; your very success, even."

"Success!" said Herbert, a little quickly, and with a half-ironical laugh; "you call those puny victories success? I never knew then, that few in this life ever attain success: I never have."

"Oh, yes!" said Motcombe, "those were all successes, and not the less because they were attained on small fields, and over obstacles which seem mean now. Disdain them not, or you will become a misanthrope. All successes in this life are empty, and if you despise the past as beneath your notice, and think that you will meet with realities in that shape in future, you lay up disappointment for yourself."

"Perhaps I set up a standard of success which will shift as I get older," said Herbert, "just as it has done already. That is what you would say. You are wrong. I look for no success now, as it is called, in this world. As God has now placed me, I look only to improvement. Pray for me that I may gain that end."

Trevanion entered at this moment, and the conversation passed into more general topics. After a time, arrangements were discussed by which the three might meet oftener, and more intimately. They were

all young, and all serious thinkers, though from a different cause, and all were bent on doing good. Ought they not to have succeeded?

Motcombe had occasion to leave the room for some minutes, when Trevanion asked Herbert if he found their friend much altered since they were together at the University.

"Very little," was the reply. "He was always silent, and reserved, and would therefore shew change less than any man of my acquaintance. The only marked difference in him is one in demeanour, which is the result of some temporary cause."

"Do you speak from actual knowledge, or from conjecture only?"

"I speak from conviction, though I know nothing of his private affairs."

"Why then do you say temporary?"

"Because there is a restlessness in that gloom of his—of course we allude to the same thing—it is not settled on him sufficiently to be anything but temporary."

"You are a very keen observer. Nevertheless, I think differently. I fancy I divine the cause, though I should not like to express my opinion."

"Oh! I divine the cause, too," said Herbert, confidently; "and I have no objection to expressing it, as it is merely the result of observation and experience. My idea is that Harry Motcombe is in love."

"Perhaps so," replied Trevanion; "but there is some struggle."

"Do you think so? I should say that it was simply this struggle: either that the lady does not care for

him, or that he thinks she does not care for him, or that the parents won't hear of the match."

"May it not be that, though he loves, some religious conviction tells him that he may not gratify his hopes —that he owes too much to his Master to allow himself to spare anything for a worldly tie?"

Herbert Capel opened both those speaking eyes of his to their utmost width, and replied, drily, "that the question had certainly not struck him in that light."

CHAPTER X.

KEMP.

Thou hast a heart attuned to all things fair;
Thou hast bright eyes of joy—a merry voice.
F. TENNYSON.

A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller betwixt life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endúrance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman—nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command.—WORDSWORTH.

BUT this was a very different visit from that which Herbert was under terms with the Doctor to pay the next morning. In truth this call at Kemp did not seem in the light of a visit at all. Unknown though Madame d'Aulaincourt and her family were to him, he did not seem to feel that they were strangers: there was something in their look and bearing familiar to him, in the associations they called up, though he really had never seen them before that first day of his appearance in Lamford. Such sympathetic attraction to people is by no means rare; and a moment's reflection will make the one in Herbert's case perfectly intelligible. His own self-chosen and forlorn life had entailed upon him all the regrets which an existence really repulsive to his nature furnished; and his thoughts would cast at times a lingering look upon those days when a mother regulated his early home,

and sisters, with their tranquil, unpretending industry, cheered the long evenings of his winter holidays. His family lived in some sort of luxury; but it was a well-regulated luxury. There was someting serene in the recollections of those days,—all so handsome, so rich, so well-appointed, and yet so still, so unruffled, so orderly: and those days seemed, somehow, reflected in Madame d'Aulaincourt, with Cecile and Frederica. He did not *know* this—he had not yet entered the house: but in the sweet-tempered, even bearing of the mother, and the open, honest, high-bred look of the children, he saw in these all over again the tranquil nobility of his mother's house. And though this visit to Kemp had been planned but a few hours before, he longed for that interval to elapse; he even felt the time tedious and heavy till it had passed. Since his accession to fortune, he had not looked forward to any event with so much pleasure. To those who have been wanderers in the world, whether from choice or from necessity, female society brings a charm to which we who have families and kinsfolk are almost strangers. It is the last tie which binds them to the higher refinements of civilized life. True, it often brings regrets for what has been, and what might have been: but even these regrets have a certain charm; and the present enjoyment is the sunlight in a dark and gloomy lifetime. It may seem strange that Herbert should have realized all this; but his nature was sensitive, his imagination vivid, and his affections strong; all which, added to a tenacious memory, produced a more powerful effect than that which might have been induced in a colder dispo-

sition. Yes, he looked forward to this visit to Kemp as to one to old friends, or at least to friends between whom and himself existed some feeling stronger than that one of hospitable good-will with which every one else in Lamford seemed inclined to regard him.

Of course there was nothing more than good-humoured banter in the expressions which had passed between him and Doctor Crompton relative to Miss Cecile d'Aulaincourt: indeed, in case any such idea may have suggested itself to the reader's mind, it will be as well to mention that no feeling warmer than the sincerest regard ever existed between them. When he spoke of the attraction he had felt towards her, he alluded to nothing more than to the similarity of humour which existed in each, and which invariably found its vent first by the same feature—a circumstance which others did not soon fail to remark. Indeed, on such a disposition as his, or after such experiences as his, Cecile was not the girl likely to excite any tenderer feeling. His ordinary habit in society was, it is true, a quick appreciation of fun, as was hers; but when his feelings were excited, his higher aspirations aroused, all this was exchanged for a deep, melancholy tenderness, which pervaded his whole being. At the time of which we are writing, anything like that one passionate, absorbing love which had once gilded even the gloomiest prospect of his fortunes, seemed out of the question. From what he knew of himself, he believed he should become attached, so to speak, to some one, and should marry. Passionately fond as he was of female society, he felt this to be most likely: but it would be no outpouring

of his whole soul, as it once had been; and in his present state of feeling it was not likely, in any case, to be at present. And, as far as relates to Cecile, he was right. He soon learnt, indeed, to love that bold, child-like beauty, but it was as a very dear sister, who loved where he loved, and laughed where he laughed, and lamented where he found reason to grieve.

Dr. Crompton had sent a note down to Bickerton late the preceding evening, conveying the intimation that his presence would be required during the greater part of the day some distance off, and that therefore he proposed making his visit to Kemp as early as ten o'clock, when Herbert could join him, unless he preferred another day. Of course Herbert did not think any day so good as the one already fixed; and consequently the two found themselves at the gates of Madame d'Aulaincourt's grounds somewhere about this rather early hour. But that made little difference. In the country, morning calls most often mean what the words seém to signify; and in a well-conducted house the ladies are just as well prepared to receive their visitors after breakfast at ten, as after luncheon at three.

It was not the very best time of year for seeing Kemp to advantage, as it had its winter coat on, but for all that, it was attractive enough after a certain fashion. There had been a sharp frost during the night, and in the early part of the morning some considerable amount of fog had prevailed, which the gradually increasing power of the sun was now drawing up from the ground as if it were a curtain. Bit by bit the outline of the old church and the seven windows of the ruined monastery were becoming more distinct in the

distance; and now a ray of sunlight is sparkling on the stream, as it gurgles away on its journey to the parent bed. The cleanly-kept lawns of Kemp are white and glittering beside the foot, and the rich evergreens—Cecile's pride, soon to assert their undivided reign—are close by, powdered with the jewels of last night's frost. Herbert paused for a moment as they passed the gate, and looked around him, and the Doctor paused too, saying, "You won't find a much prettier spot than this in the place, I think, Mr. Capel." Herbert readily assented, for the remark admitted of no dispute, and they walked on.

Frederica alone was in the drawing-room when they entered, engaged in arranging some tickets which were part of a somewhat complicated scheme of Mrs. Tyentham's for the relief of the poor—the regulation of which had been confided to Miss Repton's care, as a tribute to the uncomplaining patience which was a main feature in her character. There was something painful in the contemplation of her, as she sat engaged in this task. The considerate affection for the interests of the destitute, evinced by the task itself, contrasted distressingly with the worn, fading look of the young girl's countenance, suggestive, in fact, of a time when other hands would have to set in order those significant pieces of card. This was, indeed, one of Frederica's retrograde mornings, which came frequently enough, alas! in the winter-time. Her manner was sweet and calm as usual—she seldom varied in this respect; but her naturally fresh colour looked dull and smeared, if one may use the expression, and her eyes, though still exhibiting that striking lustre which

was their chief characteristic, stood out unnaturally over the dark, sunken rims which encircled them. The Doctor, however, took little notice outwardly of her appearance—it was part of his calling, that,—and introduced Herbert with his usual good-natured *bonhomie*, as he would have done to the most promising convalescent on his list.

Madame d'Aulaincourt and her daughter were not long in adding their presence to the party. The former hailed joyfully the Doctor's early visit, as it would give him a better opportunity of judging of her niece, who had a habit of rallying a few hours later in the day, and thereby practically denying in her appearance the fond lady's complaints about her health. But Madame d'Aulaincourt reasoned foolishly here. Doctor Crompton, though it was his custom, no doubt for professional reasons, to pooh-pooh the catalogue of symptoms submitted to him, knew perfectly well what was the matter with Frederica, and was just as well aware of her appearance in the night and early morning as if he had been an actual witness of it.

Cecile looked as usual, fresh, beaming, and overflowing with good spirits. The neat tidiness of her appearance, both in dress and movement, which seemed to be the inheritance of her foreign extraction, made her particularly attractive. She was a woman in build and growth already, but she had quite enough of the child left in her manner to shew her youth and guilelessness. The bright twinkling look of recognition which lighted up her eyes when she saw Herbert, although they could only just be said to have met

before, and the honest, fearless stretch-out of the hand, in lieu of the bow which fashion and precedent prescribe at a first introduction, were instances of this. There was something so artless, so perfectly genuine, pervading this half-child, half-woman, that Herbert might fairly have been excused if he had felt inclined to be captivated. As it was, he thought he had rarely seen anything so charming as this small family; and everything around him encouraged the opinion, partaking as it did of their presence in the minutest particulars.

"I hope I did not keep you waiting," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, after a few words to the Doctor on her niece's state; "but Christina Percy had but just come up, and she has been such a stranger of late, that I was trying to persuade her to stop and spend the day with us. It is only fair of her, is it not?"

"And has she consented?"

"Yes; and she is only now up-stairs taking off her things."

"You are in luck, Mr. Capel," said the Doctor: "you will have an opportunity of seeing, as well as of comparing, three of our fairest flowers at your leisure."

"My fortunate star has indeed been shining of late."

"Pray, Mr. Capel, why did not you come and see us before?" said Madame d'Aulaincourt, good-humouredly.

"It was all the Doctor's fault," said Herbert, submissively.

"Well, after that, I may leave you to abuse me behind my back, without much hope for my reputa-

tion," said the Doctor: "Why, my dear lady, he has been making love to the Dryads—to the sprites of his own woods—this fortnight past."

"Are you, then, so fond of solitude?" said Madame d'Aulaincourt.

"No, I think not, generally," answered Herbert, reflectingly; "but I have had so much to engage my attention lately—so much that is new and unexpected, that I have been somewhat scared. You will have no reason to complain of my shutting myself up now,"—with a glance at the two girls.

At this instant the door opened, and Miss Christina Percy entered the room. As this young lady plays rather a prominent part in these pages, it will be necessary to give her a few lines to herself before proceeding. She was just, or perhaps not quite, of the middle height, and seemingly, of about eight-and-twenty years of age. Her figure was rather a neat than a good figure, wanting somewhat of that slimness which is the perfection of grace. Her face was inclined to a certain squareness,—probably from an appearance of decision about the mouth, which to a stranger gave her, at the first, the air of too much determination. Her eyes were large, round, and dark; her hair very luxuriant, and as black as jet, resembling, as did also the clear brown of her complexion, that of a gipsy. Her hands were small, long, and exquisitely white, and, when resting her face on them, as was sometimes her custom, contrasting strikingly with the ruddy tint of her cheek. But for a certain staidness of manner, which proclaimed that she had long passed her 'teens, she would have been beau-

tiful; and doubtless, in her early youth must have been exceedingly lovely. In dress she was plain to a fault,—being generally clothed from head to foot in the same colour and material, and bearing no ornament save a large massed Malachite cross attached to a chain of hair.

With so many points of attraction, it may appear strange, but Christina was not a favourite with those who were on any but the most intimate terms with her. That expression of decision to which we have alluded, together with a *brusque*, pointed diction, the expression of an intellect which was seldom at fault, probably had a good deal to do with this result; but, whatever be the cause, an idea was abroad, even among those who ought to have known her better, that she was rather an awful personage at times. "Miss Percy knows how to take care of herself, I should think!" had fallen from other lips more than once. And "I say; Miss Percy will be there: so mind your P's and Q's," was the somewhat ominous warning which had been given to strangers that had but just made her acquaintance. Never was an estimate of a person in this world more false than the one which these expressions tended to establish. Whatever her outward manner, a tenderer, more sensitive, or more timid creature seldom breathed, than this high-souled woman. In her daily avocations she was weak to a fault. Her cook lorded it over her, and she fairly ran away from the housekeeper. A row with a housemaid broke her down; and she would sooner be cheated than face a tradesman with orders from her father to convince him of a false item

in his account. Brave she was in principle. A great sacrifice, a noble disregard of self in the cause of a sufferer, were as natural to her as it was to be mute under persecution, or to faint almost if her ponies were too fresh for her.

She was a rare combination of quick intellect and sensitive impressions, of decision in purpose and distrustfulness of self in action, of indignation at what was wrong, and of indulgence for the person who committed the wrong. After her introduction to Herbert, she did not at first speak, being engaged in watching him out of her honest, clear eyes, as he conversed with Cecile; nor was it until roused by a remark of Madame d'Aulaincourt, that she fell into her ordinary manner of intercourse.

"It was too bad of Christina not to come to us yesterday," said Madame d'Aulaincourt: "she came home on Tuesday night."

"I ought,—ought I not?" said Christina, affectionately pressing the speaker's hand.

"Then why did you not?" said Cecile, pointedly.

"Because I had a duty to perform which admitted of no delay. You know that dissenting girl, Milne?"

"Ay, ay," said the Doctor; "she has got a place up at Bolder, I hear."

"She would not have got it if I had consulted my inclination, and had come and seen Madame d'Aulaincourt first," replied Christina: "I found that Mr. Strong had actually succeeded in inducing Mrs. Neeld to change her mind."

"And why, pray?" asked Madame d'Aulaincourt, who, holding somewhat latitudinarian views herself,

was virtuously furious at such conduct: "is not a Dissenter as much entitled to the place as a Churchwoman?"

"Oh, Aunty!" said Frederica.

"That question did not arise," said Christina, laughing; "there was no Churchwoman in the case here. Charlotte Milne was the only candidate,—indeed, the only one qualified for the situation about Lamford. Mrs. Neeld must have sent to Huntingdon, if Charlotte did not suit."

"But I thought that you were such an uncompromising Churchwoman yourself, Miss Percy," interrupted the Doctor: "How is this, that I find you taking up a schismatic?"

"Because I wish to bring her back to Church, wherein she was baptized," said Christina, decisively: "She is a girl of excellent character, and but for the people by whom she is surrounded, would probably never have gone to the meeting-houses at all."

"But what possible objection could Mr. Strong have to so meritorious a project?"

"Mr. Strong is one of those old generals who think that no tactics can succeed but their own, and who are very angry with every one else if they don't succeed. He had tried his arts of persuasion on Charlotte; he had blown her up; he had blown up her grandmother; he had blown up the whole district where she lives,—the cats included, I dare say; and finding that all this scolding was useless, the *fiat* went forth that Charlotte should not be recommended for the place."

"And what did you do?"

"When I came back, I found that Mrs. Neeld had actually declined to take the girl; and as I was not going to let Mr. Strong think he had got it all his own way, I set off yesterday morning to Bolder myself."

"What! not on foot?"

"How else could I go? Papa has gone and lamed one of my ponies."

"And did you succeed?" asked Herbert.

"Yes, capitally. Mrs. Neeld, I think, was very glad to be off sending to Huntingdon, as well as to have a friend to back her up against Mr. Strong, who, I suspect, has been blowing her up with the rest. I got back at about four in the afternoon, went to Mrs. Milne's at once—and Charlotte was in her new place last night by nine."

"Bravo!" cried the Doctor: "such counter-marching deserved success. If ever I get into a scrape with the parsons, I'll come to you."

"You will get into a scrape with your patients, if you don't go and see them," said Christina, who thought that too much of the Doctor at one time did not add to his attractions.

"By Jove, you're right," said the old gentleman, jumping up: "Here, I must see Miss Freddy in another room. Mr. Capel, I shall leave you here; make acquaintance while you can. Good-bye."

So saying, the Doctor, accompanied by Frederica and Madame d'Aulaincourt, left the room.

"A good old man, the Doctor," said Christina, coolly, when they had gone; "only he ought not to be too much indulged."

Cecile looked up at Herbert with such an irresistibly sly look at this, that Christina detected it at once. "There, Mr. Capel," she said, stitching at some piece of linen which she had in her hand, "Cecile is dying to tell you her joke. Doctor Crompton is supposed to be aspiring to the honour of my hand;—we were formed for each other; there is just the legitimate difference in our ages,—I am not quite nine-and-twenty, and he will soon be seventy."

"I congratulate you," said Herbert.

"No don't, not till you know all. 'The course of true love never did run smooth.' Mr. Strong also looks upon me with the eye of favour; and he is such a terrible rival, that I doubt whether Doctor Crompton will ever get further than the proper position for making an offer as long as the other remains in the parish. So I must pine, unless Clarinda Trentham will be good enough to remove the obstacle from our path."

"Don't have Mr. Strong, Christina," said Cecile, with mock earnestness; "he only wants your cross."

This allusion to the scarcity of jewellery ordinarily carried by Christina tickled them all so much, that they continued laughing till Madame d'Aulaincourt and her niece returned.

"What is the matter?" said the former.

"Nothing," replied Christina, "only Cecile is so droll."

"I hope you don't think her forward, Mr. Capel," said Madame d'Aulaincourt.

"Oh! pray don't say so," replied Herbert, who was delighted with his new acquaintances.

"Do you know, Madame d'Aulaincourt," said Christina, "that I heard such an odd conversation last night at old Mrs. Milne's. Our laughing so just now has put me in mind of it. When I got back from Bolder, I went, as I told you, down to see Charlotte at once. She was not at home, and so I thought I would speak to her grandmother herself, as I feared that if the former did not get into the place at once, she might lose it altogether. Well, I went down there: you know she is living in Myatt's Buildings, that row of clean new cottages behind Gurfitt's piece.

"On presenting myself, I was shewn through the kitchen, which opens into a small patch of garden abutting on the road, by a little girl, into a sort of back-parlour, which was scantily furnished with a table, a sick-looking arm-chair, two humbler cane-bottomed ditto, a few Scripture-prints in black frames, and a large money-box, which informs every one it may concern, by a legend on its exterior, that so many pence put into it every week will build a schismatic place of worship in so many months. The girl begged me to be seated, and said that Mrs. Milne would be there directly. As I passed through the kitchen, I had noticed two old women respectably dressed, waiting therein, obviously bent, like myself, on a visit to the hostess; and as the walls were of the thinnest, I now found myself an unwilling hearer of all they had to say to each other, which you will allow was diverting.

"'And you did not go to hear him, Mum?'" said one.

"'No, Mum, I couldn't get away. Our old man was

that ill with the rheumatics, that I daredn't stir a mossel from his side the whole night.'

"'Lor, think on it, Mum," was the reply: 'Well, I do wish you'd a-been there, that I do.'

"'Well, I am sure, so do I. And what was his discoorse, Mum?'

"'He discoorsed about bringing up o' children,' said the first speaker: 'I thought, poor man, he'd a' killed hisself; it was an hour and a half afore he'd done.'

"'Lor, bless me! I wish I'd a-been there, that I do,' said the unfortunate absentee, much to my astonishment, who had expected an avowal of just the contrary nature.

"'Yes, Mum,' said the first speaker, 'that he was; and when he left off, he looked so worritted, it give me quite a turn.'

"'It must a' done,' said Absentee, sympathetically: 'What he said was very true, and I wish my 'usband could ha' heard it. The natur' of children, he said, can only be deweloped by the mother. The father teaches 'um trade, and handicraft, and sich-like, but the natur' of the children, whether they be pious and sich-like, depens upon the mother.'

"'Ah! he is a clever man,' said Absentee.

"'Bah!' said the voice of a man, as if from the little front garden, where he had been enjoying the subject. 'If he said that, he is no better than a fool. It's the fathers as makes the boys: blow the petticuts!' I laughed so just at this point, that I was afraid of being heard, and before I could catch any more, Mrs. Milne entered."

"They are all Dissenters, are they not?" asked Madame d'Aulaincourt.

"I believe nearly the whole row," was the reply.

"Mr. Capel, shall you patronise our ball?" said Madame d'Aulaincourt, who thought that this subject might not be very interesting to her visitor.

"Certainly, I shall do myself that pleasure."

"That is right," answered the lady: "gentlemen are very scarce in these parts."

"How shall you go, Christina?" asked Cecile.

"How!" replied Christina; "why, as myself to be sure; it is not a fancy ball."

"No, I know that; I mean, what shall you wear?"

"My dear child, when you come to my time of life, you will think a day or two quite sufficient time to decide upon that: as yet, it wants nearly a month.

"It would not be time enough for Cecile," said Frederica, "for she changes her mind on the subject once, at least, every day."

"And the worst of it is, that the decision does not depend upon herself, after all," interposed Madame d'Aulaincourt.

"Oh! Mamma, you promised me I should choose my own flowers."

"If they will suit the colour of your dress."

"Is it a secret what that is to be?" asked Herbert.

"No secret," was the reply; "only I have not thought about it myself as yet."

"Then, Mamma, there will be no difficulty in choosing the dress to suit the flowers. If I can get lilies of the valley, I shall never change my mind again."

"Surely they can be made," said Herbert.

"They don't make flowers at Huntingdon," said Cecile, despondingly; "and mamma won't send to London."

"It is not that I won't, Cecile," said her mother; "it is that I seldom deal in London, and such a matter is not of sufficient importance to trouble others respecting it."

"I shall be in town next week," said Herbert; "I wish you would honour me with the commission."

Cecile looked appealingly at her mother.

Madame d'Aulaincourt hesitated:—"I do not like to consent. However, Mr. Capel, I suppose I must say this: if you should see some flowers of this sort, you may buy them; but pray don't have them made."

"I have no doubt I shall meet with some," said Herbert, with a meaning look at Cecile.

"Have you made any improvements at Bickerton yet, Mr. Capel?" said Madame d'Aulaincourt.

"You must drive over and see, Madame d'Aulaincourt," said Herbert.

"Oh! dear, that reminds me," broke in Christina: "do you know that the gentlemen here have been laying bets upon something connected with Bickerton which does not admit of a question?"

"Then some of them will lose their money," remarked Herbert.

"And deservedly: there never was such nonsense."

"What is it?" asked Madame d'Aulaincourt.

"Why, Mr. Hetherington started the idea last night at our house," said Christina, "that the breakfast-

room at Bickerton commands a view of the monastery, while we all know that that is a distinction which Kemp has alone enjoyed time out of mind."

"Of course," said Cecile, indignantly; "who disputes it?"

"Both Mr. Hetherington and Dr. Crompton do; and Lester Harbottle has got some bets from them on the subject."

"How very silly of them," said Madame d'Aulaincourt: "I remember the question was raised only two years ago, when Mrs. Martin went up to the house and set the matter at rest."

"I quoted her," said Christina: "I am sure she is in general considered as infallible."

"Is not that the Mrs. Martin who is so very well connected?" said Herbert, with a sly look at Cecile.

"The same," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, innocently; "she is related to the late Lord——"

"Oh! Mamma," cried Cecile, with her clear ringing laugh; "he knows the joke."

Everyone joined in the laugh;—Madame d'Aulaincourt saying, with a shake of the head, "That was too bad of you, Mr. Capel, to take me in in that way."

"Pray forgive me," replied Herbert; "but she has been thrown in my teeth so inveterately since I came here, that I really am delighted to be able to prove her wrong in one instance."

"Wrong?"

"Yes, wrong, so far as she is an authority for the question now. The breakfast-room, or rather the library, as it will be, at Bickerton, does command the view in question."

"But how is that?"

"I will explain. Do you remember the handsome beeches close to the park-hurdles?"

"Certainly."

"Well, they are down."

"Oh, what a shame!"

"I am very sorry you think so. I discovered the view directly. I thought it was a sin to block that view, so they were doomed. Dr. Crompton probably noticed it when he was up with me yesterday, but was ignorant of the cause, and so took it for granted that it was the same always."

"Well, I am sorry for the beeches," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, "and I am jealous of a privilege which was hitherto peculiar to Kemp."

"I think it is an advantage," said Cecile; "it will give Colonel Deane a new topic to talk about, which is something."

"Cecile, don't forget yourself," said mamma.

CHAPTER XI.

CELIBATE CLERGY.

> But Thou, dear Lord,
> Whilst I traced out bright scenes which were to come,—
> Isaac's pure blessings, and a verdant home,
> Didst spare me and withhold Thy fearful word,
> Wiling me year by year, till I am found
> A pilgrim pale, with Paul's sad girdle bound.
>
> LYRA APOSTOLICA.

THE few words let drop by Herbert respecting the habitual gloom of Motcombe's manner in the short conversation they had after the visit to the Vicarage, had never ceased to haunt Trevanion ever since. The idea that all his sadness was to be attributed only to the ups and downs of an earthly passion, was contrary both to the latter's hopes and to his convictions. He had so accustomed himself to look upon every act of this, his model, as the result of some noble and elevated aspiration, that for a time he could not even entertain Herbert's suggestion. But it would creep on him nevertheless, and by degrees his mind became accustomed to its presence; but whichever way he turned it, the conclusion itself was too mean and unworthy of the man to be handled without indignation. After a time, however, it began to recur to his memory that

he himself had thought that the mortification of some such earthly hope might be causing the struggle, the evidence of which both had remarked, so that the coincidence of thought, so far as it related to the existence of such a hope, was singular; and the only difference, therefore, between them was as to whether it had been brought into contact with a holy principle, or with mere earthly obstacles. The latter idea vexed and irritated him. What if the obstacles were to be removed,—suddenly, perhaps,—and he was to have to look upon his pattern of self-denying priests as a married parson, bowing down to earthly affections, and with earthly ties and earthly prospects governing every step in his existence.

To explain Trevanion's feelings more fully on this subject, it will be necessary to inform the reader that at the time he entered the ministry a very strong idea had seized on his mind that a priest of the Church ought not to marry. This arose from no Romanist predilection: his feelings with regard to that communion were clear, unprejudiced, and impartial, strongly partaking of veneration for its antiquity, and its undoubted foundation in apostolic truth, but with a full discernment of those abuses which alone now prevents its being in unity with ourselves. No; the idea arose from a pure religious conviction, which, while it quite admitted the justice of the discretion which the Church has allowed in the question, left it plain to his mind that the really conscientious priest must have no tie, no care, to divert his energies from his Master's work. Still, at that time it was no more than an opinion, hardly followed out, and certainly not

fairly weighed, and was perfectly open to qualification from experience, or other reasonable agency. His acquaintance with Motcombe, however, and the study to which he subjected his character, rather encouraged this view than otherwise. Though he had never had any conversation on these subjects with either of his *confrères*, Motcombe's devotion to his calling, Motcombe's single-heartedness and general mode of acting in the work, made him fancy him a living instance of the view he had espoused,—more, a meritorious instance; for with him there had been a struggle—were still regrets—if worldly chafings against so holy a chain can be called regrets. But since Herbert's expression of opinion, all this seemed doubtful. Trevanion's perplexity was great; and he was determined, at all events, to sound Motcombe's opinion on the question of the marriage of the priesthood,—perhaps to-night, for to-night he was to meet him at Mr. Strong's,—to-night certainly, if there was an opportunity. The opportunity was afforded: there was no one to meet them but Hetherington, and he did not come in until after the wished-for topic had been duly set on foot. This came about very luckily, for Trevanion, on entering Strong's lodgings, found him busy in detailing to Motcombe some incident in the married life of Mr. Martin, the late curate, who had left Lamford some six months previous to the latter's advent into it, with the keepsake of a wife and a piece of plate as a *souvenir*.

"I think," said Motcombe, for want of some better observation, "that the Vicar ought to make celibacy a condition in his curates, as they all seem to end their

connexion with the parish through matrimony. What say you, Trevanion?"

No remark could have suited Trevanion's views better than this, and he answered at once—

"You know that I am an advocate for unconditional celibacy in the priesthood."

"Indeed!" said Motcombe, surprised.

Strong brought his glasses to bear on the junior curate, and replied, "A man's a great ass to marry at all, priest or no priest, to my mind."

This opened such a wide field for discussion, that no one felt inclined to plunge into it, and there was a pause, to conclude which Motcombe again volunteered a commonplace word or two, as a relief.

"Ah! you are a celibate from inclination, not from duty."

"As for duty," returned Strong, in his dictatorial tone, "a man may marry if he likes, and has got money to support a wife; but if he has not and marries—and then starves, why it serves him right."

"That remark applies pretty equally to every profession, does it not?" asked Motcombe.

"Yes," said Strong; "but more to ours than to any other, because among the clergy marriages are every day contracted which no sane man in any other calling would ever dream of contracting."

"How do you mean?" asked Motcombe.

"How do I mean!" repeated Strong, in his *brusque* way, and as if he felt himself insulted at being asked to explain his own remark; "Why, what sane man in any other profession would ever dream of marrying on

one hundred and fifty pounds a-year, as this wretched Martin, your predecessor, has done?"

"True!" remarked Trevanion: "I had never thought of looking at it in that light. It is wrong, even in a worldly way."

"And in what other light would you look at it?" asked Strong, feverishly.

"In the light of a wrong to God—an insult to the holy ministry with which a priest is endowed. I have been inclined to look upon marriage in the priesthood as wrong, because it divides the heart which should be only our Master's. But you shew me that these marriages, imprudent even in a layman, do more,—they sow the seeds of trials which must alienate the priest's affections from his work more than ever—must cramp his energies, and, by entailing on him temporal afflictions, they leave no place for spiritual zeal."

This was far too disinterested a view for Mr. Strong, even if he altogether comprehended it; so he merely replied to it by a grunt, and turned enquiringly to Motcombe. The latter, however, was too much struck by this distinct enunciation of the younger curate's views to let the subject drop, and was about to speak, when Hetherington entered.

"Here's Hetherington," said Strong: "What do you think, Doctor? one of the parsons here is advocating unconditional celibacy in the priesthood."

"Which?" said Hetherington, looking at Motcombe somewhat cynically.

"Oh, not I!" said Motcombe, laughing; for he was perfectly aware of the unfounded jealousy which

the young surgeon entertained of him in respect to the very foolish and undisguised admiration of himself at times displayed by Miss Dillwyn:—"I think there are occasions and circumstances where a priest not only may, but ought to marry."

"Do you, really?" said Trevanion, looking at him with curiosity: "I should have thought you the last man for that opinion."

"And I," answered Motcombe, "should have thought you the last man to be so decided on such a question."

"And I," said Strong, "can't see what you can find in the subject to make a question of it at all."

"On the contrary," interposed Hetherington, who had been keenly catching up every word of the foregoing remarks, "I am only too glad to find in Mr. Trevanion a clergyman who does not think it part of the duty of his calling to sport with the affections of his lady parishioners."

"Nay, nay," said Trevanion, annoyed that the surgeon should so forget himself; "there is no question about that here. The point is this: are there circumstances and occasions, as Motcombe says, in which a conscientious Christian priest can rightfully marry?"

"Certainly, that is the point to be proved," said Hetherington, only too glad to hear Motcombe driven into an explanation which might afford the smallest ground to feed his jealousy.

"I have no objection to explain myself," said the latter; "only that is not the fair way of putting it. The Church, in her wisdom, permits marriage in the

priesthood; and to designate it as anything but rightful, would be to impugn her discretion. In point of fact, therefore, it lies with you to *prove* her wrong, which the position you advance would imply. This you cannot do, I suspect, and consequently I am willing to explain myself in the way you say is the point to be proved; or, in other words, to shew the justice of the discretion she has left us."

"Stuff!" said Strong, with a growl: "what is to prevent a parson marrying, except prudence?"

"As I understand Trevanion's view," continued Motcombe, "he would say not so much that celibacy is compulsory in the priesthood, as that it constitutes the higher line of duty among its conscientious members; that the Church, in leaving it to the option of her ministers, does not the less forcibly inculcate celibacy, or the less expect its observance, because she does not enforce it by a written law."

Trevanion nodded.

"If so, there are indeed many of us in darkness; and for their sake, if for no other reason, I hope it is not so. But I do not believe it is so. That the observance of such a rule may shew a high line of self-sacrifice most meritorious in itself, as all other courses of the like kind, I don't dispute; but that it is an unqualified duty, an unquestionable obligation on the priest, I cannot agree. There is no discretion in such a case which could command our respect for a moment. To my mind, the discretion allowed by our branch of the Church is traceable to the fact that the priests are but men of varied sensibilities and weak-

ness, and that they are placed in situations of varying requirements and responsibilities; and that though there are priests equal to these during a life of celibacy, and parishes which would be benefited by their incumbent's observing it, there are, on the other hand, localities which require it, and pastors on whom marriage has no worse effect than in calling out latent sympathies, as well as in enabling them to discharge severe duties with greater effect."

"Ever thoughtful of others," said Trevanion to himself; "yet he thinks it the higher line of duty himself, nevertheless."

"'Localities which require marriage,' and 'latent sympathies' indeed!" broke in Strong, at this juncture: "what parson ever thinks of them? All he considers is himself. Many a man takes orders to get married. Look at men on every side, like this Martin of ours, marrying on a hundred and fifty pounds a-year; or even those who have livings which would afford a competence to a single man, why, they must needs marry too, and have children on that. All the 'latent sympathy' I have is for the living, which loses the benefit of the money which has to support such luxuries."

Strong brooked no qualification in his views, and became indignantly virtuous at once.

"What do you mean by men taking orders to *get* married?" asked Hetherington, as if he were making some curious psychological enquiry.

"Have not you heard of men going into the Church because they were engaged? Why, I was reading the other day Dr. Kitto's Memoirs. He really talks of the prospect of taking holy orders and getting mar-

ried, as if it were almost part and parcel of the same proceeding."

"Never mind Dr. Kitto," said Hetherington: "what I want to know is, why a person should wait to take orders before he gets married, if matrimony is the object?"

"Because no prudent parent will give his child to a man without a position," said Motcombe; "and that certainly is a mischief quite apart from the present question, and one which cannot be exaggerated. Parents now-a-days, who would not dream of giving their daughter to a man in any other profession without a certain competency, marry them, in the most headlong way, to clergymen, be they ever so poor, because they have a position, and because there is always the chance of a living, be it ever so small, *in futuro*."

"Well, and what next?" said Hetherington, getting interested.

"Why, then there is a family, and no benefice comes; or if it does come, it is too small for their wants. And hence ensue want of means, anxieties, loss of health to the clergyman, and, of course, indirectly, suffering to the parish,—*for benefices were never intended that the holders should spend the proceeds of them altogether on themselves*,—and finally, what is more to our present purpose, as it goes to support Trevanion's argument respecting the celibacy of the priesthood, the deprivation of those services to which, at ordination, the priest vowed all his energies."

"Bad in every way;—a sin in the priest, a sin in the parent!" said Trevanion.

"Say, rather," said Strong, with a growl, "a gross blunder in the parent, the results of which serve him right."

"Yes; that's all very well," said Motcombe; "but to prove Trevanion's argument, marriage must be a sin in a priest who has independent fortune and marries, and on whom want of means, loss of health, anxiety, &c., do not fall from these causes. The headlong way in which priests marry is no doubt a grievous folly,—to call it by no stronger term; but that is beside our question. What I affirm is, that there are parishes to whom marriage in their pastor is a boon, and that there are priests in whom marriage awakens energies and sympathies to which they were strangers before, and to whose overstrained and high-pitched systems it brings comforts and consolations, without which these would be constitutionally unable to bear the work imposed upon them."

"Bah!" said Strong; "the only sympathy which I should have if I were married, would be sympathy for those who had made fools of themselves likewise."

"Well, but—" said Hetherington, who was now forgetting his prejudices in the interest the subject was awakening: "well, but I find a difficulty, Mr. Trevanion, in your view, which I think disposes of the question. Priests are men. Now I do not mean to advance human weakness as an excuse for self-gratification in their case, but we medical men know that there are some natures utterly obscured by the want of female society."

"Nobody wishes to deprive them of female society," said Trevanion.

"I find a difficulty in expressing myself," returned the surgeon. "The human nervous system is so constituted, that where certain strains are imposed upon it, it *must* have corresponding influences to renew as well as to soothe it. No mere female society, such as is afforded in the intercourse of daily life, is sufficient for this,—it must be something more intimate."

"What said the Spirit to St. Paul?" answered Trevanion: "'My grace is sufficient for thee;' but for your argument, if passions which a priest should never entertain are not brought into it, a sister will be sufficient."

"Doubtless, to those who have them," replied Hetherington; "but at the same time, if you allow me that, there is an end of your case. You grant that the need of such female intercourse may, at times, exist; if the Spirit is sufficient to supply this want in every case, the Church has erred in leaving a discretion."

"I think you must qualify your argument, Trevanion," said Motcombe: "granted that it is the highest line of self-sacrifice in a priest to deny his inclinations, that does not make it a sin to do otherwise, if you allow what Hetherington has suggested. You would have it that marriage is wrong because it must divert the heart from our Master, which should be His only; and wrong again because it presupposes other worldly ties, which, with their attendant anxieties, will divert it still more. But is there not a way of looking at this in a different light? Suppose the conscientious priest to love his wife and children as God's gifts, and to use them as exponents

of His glory, what would you say then? Only allow that this may be, and you offer true testimony to the wisdom of the discretion which the Church has given."

Trevanion was silent; he still thought that Motcombe spoke out of charity for the weakness of others, though in reality he chose the higher course himself.

"At the same time you must acknowledge that the discretion has been grossly abused, Mr. Motcombe," said Hetherington, with a side-glance again at his own jealousy.

"I do. I acknowledge it has, and with shame that it *is* abused daily."

"How?" said Hetherington, unknowingly asking an explanation of his own question.

"In the imprudent marriages already mentioned, if in no other way. Benefices were not meant as provisions for needy priests, but as a means for them to discharge more effectively their spiritual functions. Again, the privilege is abused often in the choice of the wife chosen. Many a parson's best efforts in a parish are rendered ineffectual by the presumptuous interference of an ignorant wife. No priest has any business to take a partner without making her thoroughly understand the nature of the position she is to occupy."

"And yet you think that some parishes are benefited by parsons' wives," said Strong.

"Undoubtedly. The very fact that they are capable of inflicting much harm proves the reverse, that it lies in their power to do much good."

"And yet the wise and the good of old were blind to the fact," said Trevanion.

"They had to do with society differently constituted to what it is now. I don't pretend to advance that that will affect the essential teaching of religion, but it is a good ground for a difference in discipline. The priesthood in those days were brought into the most intimate connection with their flocks by means of what has been long practically discontinued, namely, *confession*. Until that is restored, a pastor must always be crippled in the discharge of part of his office; and in this respect the parson's wife may repair deficiencies—very slightly, perhaps—for nothing can supply the want of that great ordinance: but the state of things which ensues from its non-observance may in some points be alleviated by a conscientious, zealous Sister of Mercy, such as every parson's wife should be."

"You must take the evils of the system as well as its good points in arguing for its expediency;" said Trevanion: "practically, which preponderates?"

"Do you wish to compare them with the evils that marked the old system?" replied Motcombe.

"No one knows better than yourself that they are exaggerated to a fearful extent, Motcombe," answered Trevanion; "and no one knows better than you that the demoralization of that day was not confined to the clergy."

"It did affect the clergy, which is enough for our present purpose," said Motcombe.

"Could not the abuse be remedied without depriving the clergy of the boon altogether?" asked Hetherington.

"Restore confession first," returned Motcombe: "it is the doctrine of our Church; and then we will talk about it."

"Let us ask Harbottle about that," said Strong, laughing.

And dinner was announced.

CHAPTER XII.

SET FAIR.

Here he had found, yet scarcely hoped to find,
Companions meet—minds suited to his mind.
Here came the worthy Parson,
And .... was happy to behold,
So near a neighbour in a friend so old.
Hither a sage physician came.—CRABBE.

THERE was not much game to be shot on the Bickerton estate. The Admiral had seldom resided on it; preserving was quite on the outside of his schemes for improvement. There were a few birds, to be sure, left to gratify Lester Harbottle's passion for field-sports, but the season was already advanced, and they were rather wild, so that Herbert's invitation to him for this purpose was rather a matter of civility than a *bonâ fide* offer of sport, and very little was consequently done in this way. But if there were few birds, there were plenty of rabbits, which had been eating down all the available profits of the estate for some time in fine style, and as shooting at them was in Lester's eyes better than shooting at nothing, a *battue* against these mischievous animals was formed, chiefly to gratify this young gentleman, at which the slaughter done was amply sufficient to satisfy his most sanguinary propensities. Of course Mrs. Trentham croaked out in her most cheery of voices against the cruelty of this proceeding; and Mr. Strong brought her a statistical ac-

count of the number of homicides committed annually by any thriving butcher in London, to convince her of the childishness of her opinion. But it would be useless to tell our agricultural readers that the step was, after all, one of great utility to the farming community—was positively necessary at Bickerton; and may fairly, therefore, be classed among those schemes of improvement which Herbert was already putting into action on his newly-acquired property.

If the step, however, had had no other advantage, it fulfilled the one main object he had in view, in asking Lester Harbottle to shoot. A desire to see what wa the mainspring of this young man's idle life, to compare it with his own, and to arouse in it hopes and prospects of a higher order than those which seemed to influence him now, had seized him, as we have seen in the drawing-room at the Vicarage. It was hardly a plan with a result in view just yet, if it indeed ever became one. It was rather a feeling of interest in a good-humoured countenance and open demeanour,—rather an idea resulting from a natural spirit of enquiry peculiar to himself, than any intention as yet to develope or improve. Herbert had many schemes to occupy him just now, many new thoughts to examine and follow out, many new objects to be attracted and struck by. In spite of all these, however, he had time to discover that much of the fault of Lester's manner of life was a want of sympathy. There was no one who looked upon his own pursuits with the same ardour as himself, at least of his own age and station, and he therefore betook himself for this purpose to others who were neither of his own age nor rank in life,

and hence he had acquired that half-sporting, half-stable-keeper's manner of speaking and moving which impresses on so many gentlemen the stamp of bad style. That other objects of interest might be found to attract him, Herbert was in a very short time convinced. He was by no means ill-informed on politer subjects, but the class of people with whom he generally associated had no sympathy with him in them; and these, therefore, had either gone to sleep, as it were, or had become so encrusted with the slang-rust of his ordinary life as to be undistinguishable, except by those who were interested enough in him to look deeper than the surface.

To do more than to make this discovery was out of Herbert's power at first. Although he saw as much as he could of Lester Harbottle, the calls upon his time, and his own dreamy habit of—on some occasions—shunning all companions, did not allow him much opportunity for systematically influencing the young man's pursuits. It was some satisfaction to see that he had acquired a sort of power over him, and that the latter would easily be led to do things which might otherwise be distasteful to him, upon their being represented to him as likely to command Herbert's approval, or to cause Herbert gratification.

One result, however, which he probably had neither foreseen nor expected, did follow from his efforts in this direction, and that was an acquaintance, and then a close intimacy, with the other members of the Harbottle family.

Of Mr. Harbottle, senior, we have already said something, as well as of his little peculiarity in reference

to Church matters. The moving cause of his eccentricities on this and other subjects was probably an attachment to Toryism now-a-days happily very rare. Old Harbottle could not abide change. Anything new was wrong, because it was change. He would sooner see use become abuse than have things done contrary to the customs and habits of his forefathers. Hence his objection to the new open sittings instead of the old pews in the parish church. Rubrical authority for a change carried no weight in his eyes. "It was a stupid rubric," he would answer, "or a Romish rubric, and our forefathers very properly treated it as of no effect." This foible extended itself also to other subjects, but the reforms in the Church being the most obvious change that was carried on before his eyes, his opinions seemed more exaggerated on them than on other matters.

We are all contradictory beings in this world, and Mr. Harbottle was no exception to his fellow-creatures. On one subject—that to which he chiefly directed his attention—his own practical shrewdness led him to improvements which gave a flat denial to the worth of his Toryism. Mr. Harbottle was a great farmer: he farmed nearly the whole of a goodly property himself, and the natural sagacity which he undoubtedly possessed soon led him to avail himself of the progress of the age in everything which bore reference to these matters. In point of fact, he was the most practical as well as the most successful farmer in that part of the country; and his acquaintance with Herbert, soon brought about by the latter's civility to his son, was of no small advantage to

that gentleman, as well as to Bickerton itself. Herbert was ever ready to learn; a few hints let drop by Mr. Harbottle upon the management of some particular spot in his estate, induced him to ask more. The old gentleman was flattered, asked him to dinner, and seeing that his advice was esteemed so valuable, proffered it on a more extended scale: indeed, he did not disdain to be present at the *battue* before mentioned. And thus the acquaintance began to progress towards an intimacy.

Of course Herbert could not hope to escape the old fellow's views on Church matters, with which the latter bored him most pertinaciously. Herbert himself hated controversy. His sympathies led him to the opinions to which Henry Motcombe leaned—his cast of mind made him cleave to all that was beautiful as well as mystical in religion; and therefore, if he had the inclination to be a disputant, it is not very likely that he would have fallen in with the old Briton's views. But he hated religious discussion of any sort. Even allowing both sides to have much that was right in their favour, to dispute upon them was, in his view, to threaten the existence of the fundamental principle of the religion each supported, namely, charity. And hence, when old Harbottle, in his rough, dogmatical English, made an attack on the clergy in his presence, as he very often did, Herbert felt supremely uncomfortable, and, in default of being able to turn his thoughts into another channel, was fain to let the torrent of his eloquence and of his indignation flow on unchecked. When the other members of the family were present, he would dexterously shelter himself

under the wing of the two Miss Harbottles, who, both having very Tractarian tendencies (a by-no-means uncommon occurrence now-a-days, by-the-bye, when the Protestantism of the father is liable to be explosive) and being learned thereupon, used to bother the old gentleman considerably. And on these occasions Herbert would betake himself to a little quiet conversation with Mrs. Harbottle, a mild, ladylike person, who never took any notice of her husband's eccentricities, and who, from the excellent, unobtrusive way she had of doing kind actions, had early commanded Herbert's admiration.

Mrs. Harbottle, indeed, was one of those patterns of domestic life in which our country has so much to boast. High-bred, but unaffected; accomplished, but never putting forward her accomplishments; patient with her husband, fondly watching over her children —she was indeed the pole-star of that family. Her subdued tranquillity was perhaps carried a little to excess; and those who did not know her might have fancied her a poor creature. But Herbert's quick, enquiring mind soon fathomed all this; and a quiet morning with this sweet and fascinating woman was one of the delights of his Lamford existence.

From such a mother, it is hardly necessary to say that the daughters were unaffected, ladylike young women. They were not personally attractive, but they were very good, amiable girls, always welcome, in whatever society they formed a part.

Thus it was that Herbert got intimate at Castle Bank. In his present position, the acquaintance of a man o Mr. Harbottle's practical attainments was

of the last importance. Herbert was not a man to leave the management of a large estate to a deputy, without making himself the master of the whole system of its working. And there were many, very many points on which such a man as Mr. Harbottle alone could give him the information as well as the advice he sought. Mr. Harbottle's acquaintance therefore was an acquisition. The latter, too, on his side, was soon well-disposed enough towards the new-comer. His winning, considerate deportment towards all, his readiness to be always learning, besides, perhaps, his position in the place, made him a favourite with most. Harbottle liked him, certainly, on his side, while his opinion of him was most amusingly wrong, though characteristic of the man.

"I think," he said one morning, confidentially, to Hetherington,—"I think Mr. Capel a very well-meaning, painstaking young man, always ready for information, and seemingly desirous to do good; though, to be sure, he is not a genius."

"Oh, not a genius!" said Hétherington, in a voice which shewed he did not understand the speaker.

"No; not a genius," repeated old Harbottle: "I mean, that it would be no harm if he was a little better furnished here," tapping his own skull, to indicate the place alluded to.

"I really hardly comprehend you," said Hetherington, in amazement; "the general idea here is that he is a man of considerable intellect."

"Quite a mistake, Sir," returned the old gentleman, authoritatively; "quite a mistake, Sir. The people in Lamford would vote a donkey clever if he was docile,

and had four thousand a-year. No, Sir, I've watched him, and I have no hesitation in saying that he is a well-meaning, painstaking, industrious young man, sincerely desirous to improve himself, but dull, Sir, dull."

"Dear me, you astonish me!" said Hetherington, with the muscles of his face tight in hand, to prevent himself laughing.

"Take my word for it, he is dull," continued the old man: "Why, I'll give you an instance of it. I was half an hour the other night trying to make him understand the jesuitical sophistry of the parsons here in that plan for re-pewing the church, and I might as well have spoken to a post."

"What did he say?"

"That was just it: he said nothing; he had nothing to say. He could not understand it. He was so painfully obtuse, that if it had been any other man I think I should have lost my temper."

Hetherington thought that if the old gentleman's struggle to keep his temper had been as severe as was now his (Hetherington's) own to keep his countenance, his forbearance was much to be commended. Was there ever such a good story? He told it at once to Miss Dillwyn, who conveyed it to Cecile d'Aulaincourt, and it was soon one of the standing jokes of the place.

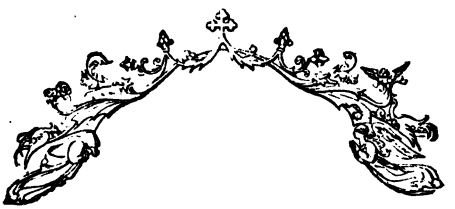
Herbert did not forget his scheme at Lamm's Ferry. Dr. Trentham had promised to entertain the idea of a resident curate thereat, and four houses were now being converted into one for the purpose of a proper chapel and school-house. If the plan progressed, Herbert had further views, which we shall hear of later.

Meantime, what with this, and learning the capabilities of his new estate, and seeking to become well acquainted with the families in the neighbourhood, his time was well taken up. He had completely won Lester Harbottle's heart by intrusting to his care the selection of two good horses for his own use. He was already a favourite with the Doctor, and he was always welcome at Kemp. At Natchetts he at present hardly knew his footing. Colonel Deane, who he could not but acknowledge improved on acquaintance, was inclined to be well with him; but the ladies were not so ready to extend the hand to him: and though their disinclination to his society did not shew itself in any overt act, yet it was impossible to divest his presence in the house from a sensation that he was considered to have supplanted one who, if not a favourite, at all events had a claim on the sympathies of the inmates, though those inmates seldom let a chance pass of shaking their heads at the dissolute habits and propensities which were everywhere imputed to the injured man.

With the three curates, perhaps, more than with others, Herbert found himself on the most intimate terms. With Motcombe, indeed, that which had been a kindly college acquaintance, bid fair to ripen into a close friendship. The two had much in common, and each could assist the other in the plans they severally formed to do good in the place. They were both of refined minds, and the similarity in their age and habits added a further inducement to this end. To be well with Motcombe was almost equivalent to being well with Trevanion; and whatever doubt there might

have been about his agreeing with Mr. Strong, his conduct respecting the curate at Lamm's Ferry had set him high in the graces of that excellent man. So that with the clergy Herbert was decidedly popular.

And thus the time passed on till Christmas, when the natural hospitality of the inhabitants, joined to the festivity of the season, tended still further to cement the intimacy, the progress of which we have attempted to trace. Herbert was by this time one of them: he came and went to the different families like the rest; took interest in local subjects like the rest; his position among them becoming daily more and more recognised; while the peculiar circumstances which attended his arrival seemed almost to have been forgotten. Even among the Deanes his high qualities and natural attractions were acquiesced in, although that stiffness which characterised his early acquaintance with them had not as yet worn off. Altogether, he was fairly entitled to the description now given him, of "Mr. Capel, of Bickerton."



CHAPTER XIII.

STARS OF THE NIGHT.

Bright was that ball-room,—a living parterre
Of the flowers of this planet . . . . . .—Moore.

WHATEVER we Londoners in our conceit may affect to think, a country ball is by no means to be despised. We, in the exclusive enjoyment of our own inaccessible *coterie*, are apt to look down on such festivities as gatherings where one meets all "sorts" of people; where bad manners and bad taste jostle each other; and where, if we ever are induced to convey our own refined and high-bred selves, it is only to wonder at the savageness of the land, and to quiz the awkwardness of the natives. But this is all moonshine. However mixed the society may be at some of these gatherings, we ought never to forget—nor, perhaps, do we, though we may seem to—that a certain portion of those who will be present, and who patronise them, are, like ourselves, well initiated into the elegancies of the London world; and that if there be a large preponderance of a class which we should not meet in London drawing-rooms, the object which induces the patrons of these balls to forget for one evening the distinctions of rank and wealth, is at all events a sure

guarantee for a few hours of real harmless enjoyment, which the observance of such differences would probably altogether frustrate. At one time there used to be among some people an amusing contempt for so-called "public balls," which of latter years, to their credit, has become greatly qualified. That public balls in the country are sometimes objectionable, particularly in the very large towns, is undoubted. The chance of meeting not only those whom "nobody knows anything about," but those also whom "everybody knows too much about," is a prospect which not every parent can face without trepidation. But the public ball of the large county town is a ball *sui generis*, and is not to be confused with that which takes place perhaps only once a-year in a locality around which the agricultural interest is predominant, and where a large influential gentry are banded together by some strong common interest. Of this class is the annual Christmas ball at Bishops Lamford. Lamford itself, as we know, is not a large town; indeed, it is not a town of the first rank in the county; but the gentry in its neighbourhood are proud, wealthy, and influential; and on this account, and in virtue of certain advantages of situation, the annual agricultural meeting in the summer is held here alternately with Huntingdon and St. Neot's, which fact alone has given the place a position perhaps beyond its deserts, and its ball has within this generation ever borne the reputation of the "best ball in the county." It has become a matter of fashion to attend it regularly, and though, of course, one meets people there whom we do not see at private parties in the neighbourhood, the prepon-

derance of pleasure-seekers are of the higher influential class by which the ball is supported. But there is another reason why a ball of this sort is by no means to be despised. As we have said, it comes but once a-year, and therefore, by those who live in the country and seldom visit the metropolis, or the large county towns, it is looked upon as the event of the year. This, and the festive nature of the season when it occurs, make it a ball in earnest. Every one enjoys it, because a twelvemonth must elapse before the like will recur again. Those are brought together who, from distance and difference of habits, it is improbable will for some little time again meet. The ball, too, has a *prestige*, as "the Lamford Ball," and for all these reasons, is invariably a very spirited and enjoyable affair.

"Be careful, my dear," says old Lady Torhaven to her son, Viscount Brixham, who has just left the University—"be careful not to lose your heart to any of those Lamford girls. They are very pretty, indeed, renowned for it, but they none of them have a shilling, and some of them are not of very high family."

"Take care of George," says young Mrs. Pokenhunter to her husband, in her nest at St. Neot's. Mrs. Pokenhunter, for a delicate and interesting reason, cannot attend the ball herself, and is naturally solicitous about the welfare of her brother in the Guards, who is down on a visit to her husband;—"Take care of George: he is always losing his heart, wherever he goes; and I am sure if he gets home safe from the girls with those great eyes,—all the Lamford girls have such great eyes; it is positively

disgusting,—it will be a mercy. I wonder you go at all, seeing how ill I am."

"Oh! George is old enough to take care of himself," says Mr. Pokenhunter; "and I am sure that but for him, I should not think of leaving you, my dear: but one must shew a fellow a little amusement when one asks him down to stay, you know." The fact is, Mr. Pokenhunter is not insensible to a good ball, where bright eyes predominate, himself.

"I am sure, Sir Charles," says Lady Tunnicliffe to the honourable Baronet the member for Huntingdon: "what you can want, at your time of life, at a village-ball—for Lamford is no more than a village—passes my comprehension."

"My dear," says Sir Charles, "I have not missed the Lamford ball for twenty years, and I won't begin now: it is the best ball in the kingdom for bright eyes, honest faces, and real enjoyment. Besides, one meets the whole county."

From this it will be gathered by the reader that the Lamford ball was worth going to. Within the place itself, too, of course, it was held in high estimation. When, on the present occasion, Miss Christina Percy was twitted with paying more than ordinary attention to her costume for that event, she replied, in the deep melodious tones peculiar to her,—"I dress for the honour of Lamford." To be sure, young Walter Harbottle mischievously observed to Miss Sylvia Trentham, "She means for the honour of Bickerton,"—in allusion to the very free-and-easy terms on which it was noticed Mr. Capel and Miss Percy had come to be by this time. But then Wal-

ter Harbottle was an idle, silly fellow; and we only record the speech to shew how proud the Lamford girls were of their annual ball.

On the evening in question, Herbert partook of a late dinner with Dr. Crompton, and fully prepared himself for the enjoyment of the evening by a penitential exercise at the hands of old Miss Crompton, who, while the Doctor was "making his toilette," as the French have it, subjected him to the history of the birth, parentage, education, deeds, and virtues of a friend of hers, one Mrs. Martin, "who was present at the last Lamford ball, and whom Mr. Capel would have liked very much indeed. Very well-connected woman to be sure, was Mrs. Martin; she was cousin to the late Lord Melbourne," &c. Having had his mind thus well purified of any thoughts of sublunary gratification, Herbert accompanied the Doctor to the Town-hall (Lamford has a town-hall). The room was tolerably full; dancing had commenced, and Cecile d'Aulaincourt, to whom he was promised for the first dance, was gazing anxiously, and somewhat disappointedly, at the door for him. She looked very charming, dressed in white, the skirt being looped-up with bunches of lilies of the valley, and wearing a wreath of the same in her hair. It was those lilies of the valley that led to the engagement for the first dance. Herbert had procured them,—how or where, Madame d'Aulaincourt could not get him to say; and it was while Cecile was expressing her gratitude, and speaking of the happiness of her approaching "first ball," that Herbert, with a half-melancholy retrospect of the day when he looked forward to his

first ball, thought of asking for the first dance. "Fancy me," he said to himself, with a half-laugh, "caring to dance with a little Miss just out of the nursery,—her first dance at her first ball." Perhaps Cecile could not have made her *debût* under more favourable auspices. Herbert danced, as he did everything else, well; and any timidity she might have felt, seemed to wear off under the unconstrained easiness of his manner, and the frank kindness of his conversation.

At the first stop in the waltz, Herbert asked Cecile who were that family shaking hands with Miss Percy.

"Those are the Neelds of Bolder," said Cecile: "you will know them. What do you think of Miss Blanche Neeld?"

"Pray which is Miss Blanche Neeld?"

"The youngest."

Herbert turned his eyes on a thin, tall, rather lithesome girl, who was clearly the youngest of the party, and replied, "She is an interesting-looking girl."

"You do not admire her, then?"

"If you ask my opinion, I think she is rather interesting than pretty."

"She is thought a great beauty about here."

"*Is* thought?" said Herbert, with the old humour in his eyes.

"You would say—and thinks herself," returned Cecile, with her own eyes twinkling up into a corresponding look of fun.

"What should make you think I meant that?"

"I am sure you did, by the look of your eyes," answered Cecile, innocently.

After another pause in the dance, Cecile said, "Don't you think Christina Percy looks charming to-night?"

"She is a very handsome woman," replied Herbert; "and yet I hardly think she does herself justice by wearing black net. Scarlet geraniums just suit her; she could not have chosen anything better: but the black net?"

"Black and scarlet are her favourite colours; but I have seen her look very well in blue.'

"She is the sort of beauty that would hardly look ill at any time," said Herbert: "It more depends, I think, on the fire and dash with which she carries off everything, when she is pleased, than any particular combination of colours."

"Look! she sees we are talking of her," said Cecile. It was true. Christina Percy not only perceived it, but seemed disconcerted at it. "Why did you come so late, Mr. Capel?"

"It was not my fault. The Doctor took such an age dressing. I do believe he wished to give his sister time to finish her sketch of Mrs. Martin's history."

"Did she explain how the relationship to the late Lord Melbourne came about?"

"No; I told her I was aware of its existence. If she had continued, I must have gone home to bed."

At the end of the dance they found themselves close to Christina Percy.

"Did you come here to dance, or to criticise, Mr. Capel?" she asked.

"I came here to dance and to *admire*," he said,

with mock politeness: "I have done the last; allow me to do the first with you. See, here is a quadrille forming."

"You ask me to dance a quadrille because you think I am a bad figure for a polka,—I am sure of it. You gentlemen of the world, who seem so careless, do all these even little things on a system."

"You seem to have studied us to some purpose to be able to form so decided an opinion. I must, however, disclaim the charge. I choose a quadrille with you because I always enjoy your conversation, and there is no time for that in any other dance."

"If we were not in a ball-room I would make you a little curtsey for that speech. Cecile wants a *vis-à-vis*: will she do?"

"No! she is young, and will expect one to *dance* opposite to her, whereas I intend to talk. There is Miss Sylvia Trentham,—she will suit us better. There." And they took their places.

"Why did you not come to Colonel Deane's last night, Mr. Capel?" said Christina, after a pause: "every one was expecting you."

"I did not care to come," said Herbert, readily: "I do not feel at my ease at Natchetts."

"I think you are wrong: they all like you very much, though, for the sake of consistency, they are obliged to keep up their indignation at Admiral Ayscough's will."

"I do not find fault with their indignation or with their disappointment, for there is as much of that feeling in it as of indignation. But I am innocent of causing it, though I am the person pre-

ferred. Why do they not forget the matter, if they like me?"

"You fancy they are not inclined to do so; there I think you are mistaken again, as in the idea of their feeling disappointment. It was nothing to them, except that they had befriended that very unfortunate young man who seemed most entitled to the property. It is your turn to dance."

After the figure was over, Herbert replied, "You think me mistaken on two points: first, in believing the Deanes disinclined to forget the will in their behaviour to me; secondly, in thinking that they have some private feeling in the matter. I affirm both; but for the first point by itself, answer me this question: Why does Miss Deane treat me with such undisguised contempt?"

"Does she continue to do so?"

You allow, then, that she did so. I reply to your last question by informing you that she declines dancing with me to-night."

"How silly!" said Christina to herself, her face flushing up.

"She professed herself engaged the whole evening, and now, see, at this moment she is being introduced to some one, and consenting to dance with him: look, she is going over her tablets, and fixing the dance."

Christina looked; it was perfectly true.

"And she declined with the same old look of contempt. Do you ask me, then, why I decline going to Natchetts? It is the only course open to me, except that of treating her in a similar way; which, though it

would serve her right, would hardly be becoming in me."

"No; I do not go with you in your views. I concur in the opinion that Miss Deane has treated you ill to-night: but if her conduct is unworthy of her, and if it be even a part of a system, still all the more reason why you should not notice it. You can well afford, with the high position which you hold in the regard of every one here, to take no notice of it."

She looked so handsome, and spoke so well, when she said this, that Herbert's admiration shewed itself in his countenance, as he gazed on her. He was roused, however, from the contemplation by Miss Sylvia Trentham's voice, interrupting him,—

"Really, Mr. Capel, you are a pretty *vis-à-vis*. This is the second time I have figured to you without notice. You and Christina ought to sit down."

Herbert laughingly apologised for his rudeness, and went through the necessary figure. As soon as it was concluded, Christina said, "But the second point? What private feeling can the Deanes have on the subject of Edward Wordsworth's disappointment?"

"If you ask respecting the Deanes as a body, my answer will be 'Perhaps none;' but if I may speak of them individually, I can only say, that Miss Deane has *certainly* every reason to be interested, and that I suspect—mind here, I suspect only, but strongly suspect—that Mrs. Deane sympathizes in the feeling."

Christina flushed a little, for she thought the imputation was uncharitable; but as she looked at the speaker, his countenance seemed so completely to refute any unworthy intention, that she checked her own

rising indignation. There was a pause, and another figure of the dance was gone through, and then she said, "You are in error; there is nothing between them."

"Miss Percy," said Herbert, "I sincerely trust I am wrong, but I have been accustomed to fancy I can read character. Miss Deane's feelings—I don't say more than her feelings—are compromised to Mr. Wordsworth, and time will shew if I have not read her aright."

Christina did not like to answer, now that Herbert put it to her in this serious way. She half felt with him, and she did not dare let her thoughts pursue the subject, for fear they should hurry her irresistibly to the same conclusion. With great presence of mind, therefore, she determined to turn her back upon it, and she effected that step in this way: "How do you think she looks to-night?"

"As always, very handsome," replied Herbert, "if she would only get rid of that sneer. But tell me, what is the flower she wears in her hair meant to represent?"

"Herself—the carnation."

"Herself—the carnation!" said Herbert, repeating the words: "You might as well speak to me in Hindostanee, and expect me to understand you."

Christina looked surprised. "You surely do not mean that you have been two months in Lamford without knowing us by our names?"

Herbert appeared more puzzled than before.

"Dear me, this is embarrassing," continued the lady: "think of the explanation being reserved for

me! Look here, Mr. Capel, did you not present Cecile with her lilies?"

"To be sure; and why not?"

"And you did not know their meaning?"

"I am in a mist."

"Don't look scared, I will soon enlighten you; only your innocence is too real not to be enjoyed for a moment. Now pay attention. You know Sir Everard Ingilby?"

"The novelist? Yes, by name, and by his works."

"Well, he is a great man here: he has a seat not many miles off. Early last year there was a great party at Natchetts, that is, private theatricals, and so forth, and Sir Everard was present. I suppose all the Lamford young ladies looked their best on that occasion: at all events, Sir Everard must have thought so; for as several of us late in the evening were in a cluster in one corner, he suddenly thought of naming us the Lamford bouquet, and each of us on that occasion received the name of a flower, which we have always borne from that hour."

"Why? for to judge from the utter inappropriateness of the name Carnation to Miss Deane, and of that of Lily to Miss d'Aulaincourt, who is as black as a poppy, which I gather to be the conclusion of your information, it does appear to me to be rather a silly proceeding."

"Granted, so far; but it was Sir Everard who originated it."

"Ah! I see: a clever man and a poet gives merit to the saying. Well, so be it. Now please continue. Let us pass over Miss Deane for the present, and tell

me the resemblance, as it appeared in the great novelist's mind, between Miss d'Aulaincourt and a lily."

"Miss d'Aulaincourt is French by the father's side."

"Well, what of that?"

"*Fleur-de-lys:* do you not perceive?"

"Pooh!" said Herbert, laughing heartily: "that is a stretch. This must all have happened after supper, I should think. But tell me more; I am getting interested. The bouquet did not consist of two flowers, I suppose."

"No; but you are laughing so, that I shall leave you to guess a little. What say you of the youngest Miss Neeld of Bolder?"

"Miss Neeld! let me see," said Herbert, looking in the direction where that young lady was: "Miss Neeld is slight, and delicate, and pale; therefore, judging from the singular infelicity with which Sir Everard has hit off his other flowers, I should say that she was the Peony."

"What do you say to the Snowdrop?"

"Come, that is a little better. Pray go on."

"Now turn your eyes on Miss Repton," said Christina.

Herbert did as he was desired, and somewhat sadly, too, as he beheld Frederica looking up at her companion, Mr. Motcombe, with a beauty that was unearthly.

"Miss Repton—what do you say of her?"

"Miss Repton," replied Herbert, a little gravely, "should be the Morning Rose."

"Well done! you have hit the right flower. That was a happier idea, was it not?"

"The rose and the lily under the same roof, I see," said Herbert, without heeding the enquiry: "I wish the rose was as robust as the lily. Well, who next?"

"Miss Dillwyn."

"You must help me there. She might be any bright, sunny flower, and suit them all well."

"She is the Anemone."

"Pretty well!" said Herbert, making a grimace, "but sounds mercenary. But about yourself—what are you?"

"Oh, you will never guess me," said Christina, with some confusion: "I was not named at first, although I was with the others; but several of them cried out, 'Tell us, Sir Everard, what is Christina?' —'Christina must have a name,' &c., &c.; and as I saw I was in for it, I said too, Come, Sir Everard, give me my name." Here Christina stopped.

"Well, what did he call you?"

"The wretch dubbed me Wall-flower. It served me right, and, as I asked for it, I determined to keep it; and I have been called Wall-flower ever since—as you might have heard often enough, had you kept your ears open."

"Very ill-bred of Sir Everard, I think," said Herbert, looking at her with much interest; "and again, very inappropriate. Who ever heard of a wall-flower in a bouquet where the carnation and the lily figure? Not that I dislike the idea of the flower for a name; it lives when other flowers exist not—it is a perennial —it never lacks fragrance. Keep to your flower, Miss Percy; and if the name ever suggests unpleasant reflections, bear in mind its attributes, and faint not,

for as long as you exist you will be valued for them. Still I would know something more. Was there no other flower? It appears to me that I have not got the key to all this."

"You have great penetration," said Christina: "There is another flower, but she is not of Lamford. There was, at the time when this occurrence took place, a young lady staying with Madame d'Aulaincourt; she was so much with all of us, that she came to be looked upon as of Lamford. I never saw any beauty of countenance in her, though I acknowledge her many excellencies—her great worth; but she turned the heads of all the gentlemen about here. One peculiarity she had which was very striking—she is one of the very smallest young women I ever saw—a very fairy in appearance. Sir Everard was much struck with her, and both in allusion to her size and her perfections, called her Mignonette, the smallest and the sweetest-smelling flower in the bouquet."

"I see the whole now," said Herbert: "He was very much struck with Mignonette, and in his ardour got rid of a happy idea. But all his poetry deserted him when he tried to name the other flowers. The best part of the inspiration is that of the fragrance representing the flower's worth. Give me, then, Wall flower and Mignonette for a study. Is there any chance of seeing the latter?"

"Yes; I believe she will be at Kemp on a visit in the summer."

"There is something about her share in Sir Everard's fancy which I like," said Herbert: "Insignificant, not very attractive, you say, but very charming."

"Take care, or you will be disappointed."

"I have no fear: I admire little people."

By-and-bye Christina recounted to Madame d'Aulaincourt and her children part of this conversation. Cecile brightened up immediately at the idea of Herbert's being perhaps taken with her friend.

"Oh! would it not be delightful, Mamma, to have Emmy at Bickerton?"

Christina, though she could hardly define the reason, did not like the subject in such a view.

"You are premature, Cecile," she said, with something of hastiness in her tone: "Because Mignonette pleased such men as Arthur Deane and Mr. Hetherington, it is by no means sure that she would even attract Mr. Capel."

But Frederica could not bear to hear Cecile's fancies even depreciated, improbable as they were, and at once introduced her gentle protest.

"Cecile cannot forget," she said, "that Mignonette had other captives besides Arthur Deane,—men of ability, too: Lord Stornroost thought her lovely; and Sir Everard Ingilby, who is an authority—"

"And therefore there would be nothing so wonderful if Mr. Capel was to think so too," said Cecile, by way of clenching her victory: "Oh! it would be so nice to have Emmy at Bickerton."

"Cecile," said her mother, gravely, "you must not be so forward. All this is very silly. Mr. Capel is far too sensible a man to be dreaming of nothing but matrimony. And your little friend cannot, at the earliest, come before May, remember."

It was almost upon Cecile's treacherous tongue to

say, "Oh! Mamma, then let us ask Emmy at once;" only Madame d'Aulaincourt looked so grave, and there was also such an expression of annoyance on Christina's face, that she really began to think she had been too hasty, and a corresponding cloud, therefore, to overspread her own countenance. This was diverted, however, by Henry Motcombe, who being close at hand, and having overheard the foregoing remarks, said laughingly—

"We have yet to see Capel's assault upon Miss Deane. I should think he would open the trenches soon, and begin in due form.

"You are not serious?"

"I am, partly: there is one very strong inducement for him to act so."

"What is it?"

"Pique," said Henry: "He is very much piqued at her behaviour; and if he is like what he used to be, you may be prepared for the result."

"I *will* not believe it of him," said Christina, indignantly: "If such was a part of his composition once, trial, as well as years, has cured him of it."

Christina was right. But we know that Mr. Motcombe had entertained that idea once before.

Meantime, in another part of the room, Clarinda Trentham had attacked Herbert with the old question of "Why were you not at Natchetts last night?" Which the latter had parried as best he could.

"Oh! you should have been there: Arthur Deane made us laugh so."

"Arthur Deane! who is he? a son of Colonel Deane's?"

"Yes. There he is, talking to Mr. Lester Harbottle. He only came home on leave yesterday."

Herbert looked at the person designated, who was a very peculiar-looking man indeed. He was very dark, like his sister, whom in countenance he very much resembled: but the large eyes, which in her had a very tender expression, when her face was in repose, had in him a most melancholy one, that was much heightened by a very thick, long, glossy moustache, worn in the fashion which the King of Sardinia first made attractive. The whole countenance, being long, was of the most mournful cast; and when the reader is informed that he added to this a voice of the most piercingly complaining description, he will agree with Herbert in wondering how such an individual could make any one laugh.

"He made us laugh so," repeated Miss Clarinda: "in his sad way he kept playing off Mr. Harbottle, whom he put in such a way by explaining that Pope-joan was a dreadfully Romanist game. You would have laughed so, too."

"I daresay," said Herbert: "but it was not quite right, Miss Trentham, to his father's guest, was it?"

"What a strange person you are!" said Clarinda, who was really too good-natured herself to believe that any one would take fun except as it was intended: "one never knows which way the wind will blow with you. I always thought you liked a joke."

"So I do, on certain subjects, and on certain occasions; and I have no doubt that even on this one I should have laughed as heartily as the rest, had I been there. But I am glad I was not there, never-

theless. Come, you look as if a glass of lemonade would do you good: let us discuss the matter calmly over a glass of that generous beverage."

But many other things happened during this evening. Herbert had to be presented to the county families, who chose to look leniently into his summary introduction among them. The clever, witty, but somewhat frothy baronet, Sir Everard Ingilby, desired his acquaintance. The Neelds of Bolder, who were quite as much interlopers as himself, wished to patronise him; and a very little penetration in that quarter discovered to him that Mrs. Neeld was a person of no very great origin, who was often very uncertain with her grammar,—sometimes much too certain with her aspirates,—and who displayed indubitable signs of desiring to marry off her daughters well and expeditiously. Their attentions to him were consequently somewhat overpowering. Besides this, he had to make himself agreeable to the heads of families, as well as to their offspring; and so the evening wore away. Near the end of it Christina Percy remarked, not without uneasiness, that he was dancing, after all, with Nora Deane, and making her laugh, too. But she did not know then that Colonel Deane, having discovered his daughter's conduct, had severely rated her, and had compelled the young lady to acquaint Mr. Capel that she had been mistaken when she informed him that her list for the evening was full—"She had still one dance disengaged," &c. All of which Herbert took as if he did not see through it,—a piece of insincerity for which he may surely be pardoned, under the circumstances.

And now the rooms are emptying; and Cecile is at home, almost too tired to undress herself; and Nora Deane is not sorry to have been obliged to dance with Mr. Capel, after all; and Christina is inclined to think that each fresh ball gets more tiresome than the last.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOREBODINGS.

Wherever love hath trodden, there
Affliction comes—a kindred power;
So twines the weed around the flower,
So poison taints the odorous air.—DALE.

Why is it thus, that fairest things
The soonest fleet and die?
That when most light is on their wings,
They're then but spread to fly?
And, sadder still, the pain will stay,
The bliss no more appears,—
As rainbows take their light away,
And leave us but their tears.—MOORE.

"THIS is but a sorry description of a ball," some of our lady readers will say, when they run over the few pages of the preceding chapter. "So it would be," we answer, "if it were intended for a description of such at all." But we must remind them, that in a tale like the present, which of itself purports to be but a mere sketch, such scenes can only be used as vehicles for the exhibition of characters which are to do duty by-and-bye, and for the recording of conversations upon which the development of the story necessarily hangs. Hence it is that we have not recorded what sweet things Mr. Hetherington said to Miss Prudden, or what rude things Mr. Strong said to Mr. Harbottle, or what silly things Mr. Walter Har-

bottle, the latter's son, said to any one who chose to listen to him. Balls, for these matters, very much resemble each other; and all that can be said respecting that at Lamford, to distinguish it from its fellows, is that it abounded in brighter faces, and was kept up with better spirit than is generally the case with other festivities of the same description.

Nor is it for us to record the usual fatigue and lassitude of the different actors on the succeeding day. This is as a matter of course. Breakfasts verging into luncheons, visits to enquire after the health of others, stories re-told, conversations repeated, little scenes re-enacted, are all parts of the morrow of such dissipations. Nothing ever returns to its old *routine* till yet one other night has been passed. The after-taste of the most innocent pleasures is reaction, a sensation of having laughed, or danced, or done too much. The penalty, if not fatigue, is in most cases listlessness.

But in the present instance there were two exceptions to this rule.

One was Christina Percy. This young lady, being gifted with tolerably good health, had nothing further to struggle against in rising betimes, than the natural inclination which we believe besets all mankind to take one more doze before getting up. And to meet this she had that custom which, during years, had become a habit, of giving her father his breakfast at nine every morning when she was at home. No night's enjoyment prolonged to the morning's hours, no passing sensation of indisposition or fatigue, had she ever allowed to interfere with this, in her eyes,

sacred duty. The old man, on his side, naturally looked for it at her hands. We who are accustomed to the daily receipt of good offices from those around us, are apt soon to forget the sacrifices they cost, or the noble motives which prompt them. But old Percy, doubtless, had a right to expect these. He had passed a life of laborious self-denial for those children that remained to him, besides one of sorrow and sacrifice for some who had been taken away. His wife was an incurable invalid, whose malady shut her out from society, and Christina, in regard to him, at all events, in some sort filled her mother's place. Nor on the morning after that Lamford ball, some of the events of which we have been detailing, did she break through her daily custom; at the usual hour she was at the breakfast-table, pouring out the old man's coffee, buttering his toast, and recounting every little piece of last night's festivity which she thought would amuse him, with the same seemingly inexhaustible spirits which, if she did not feel, she always put on in his presence, to cheer and enliven him.

She had not been to the morning service, as was her wont, it is true, but under the circumstances she may be excused for that. It was the middle of January, and an eight o'clock service after a ball is an effort which we know that some young ladies manage to overcome during the summer, but to miss which may fairly be an indulgence during the inclement season.

Herbert Capel, however, was there, and he is the other exception to the weary revellers of last night, who are still re-acting in their dreams the scenes then passed through. Possessed of a strong constitution,

and of temperate habits, a few hours were sufficient to restore the tone of the system to him. A cold bath, and a gallop across the park on a stout pony, brought him down to the church looking as fresh as if there had been no ball at all yesterday-night, with the warm blood mantling in his cheeks from their contact with the clear winter's air. There were few enough attendants at the service, and those of the poorer class; a slight satire, he thought, on the weary sleepers who, some hours later, listless and foot-sore, would be assembling round the noonday breakfast-table. It was a common custom of Herbert's to breakfast with one of the curates after service, unless the affairs of the estate required his early return to Bickerton. Trevanion was the officiating clergyman this morning, and the two wended their way to the latter's lodgings, Trevanion much astonished at seeing his friend so early after such an occasion.

"It is quite clear, Capel, that you are not in love," he said, when they got home.

"What, because I am up so early? I don't see that: perhaps my thoughts banished sleep; or perhaps I expected to see the fair one at church."

"Very wrong of you, if you came for such a purpose, which I don't believe, for you are not that sort of man. Besides, no lover ever enjoyed such robust health and spirits as those which you carry this morning."

"Take care," said Herbert, in the same strain; "nothing is so deceitful in its symptoms as the tender passion. What is diagnostic of a successful flame in one man, portends suicide and despair in another.

I'll get my lady-love, by-the-bye, to work you a kettle-holder; you have burnt your fingers twice in trying to fill the teapot."

"Yes, that would be a useful offering," replied Trevanion: "the worst of it is, that the ladies now-a-days think that we parsons have no wants, save for embroidered stoles and Bible-markers."

"Thoughtless of them, to be sure," said Herbert: "But to return to the very vain and worldly topic we were discussing. If my hours and appearance denote me free from the tender passion, how about those of our friends who were not at church? Dear me, Lamford is in a bad way!"

"Ah! with some of them, I am sorry to say, it is not only this morning."

"Well, let us take the regular attendants: is Hetherington one?"

"He is not a regular attendant, but he attends occasionally."

"There is no doubt about his being in love."

"Not the slightest; he does not deny it himself."

"Then he is no proof of the value of your criterion."

"My criterion will only apply to the ladies," said Trevanion: "Miss Percy is a regular attendant, fine weather or foul. She must have had a bad night;" and he looked meaningly at Herbert.

"Ah! you mean that as a shot at me," said the latter, who was exceedingly quick in catching the drift of an observation: "Well, it is a pity we do not understand each other better, or we should have been both there. I don't think your criterion satis-

factory. However, it will prove itself on Harry Motcombe as well as any."

"He is the last man, I should think, with whom one could rely on it, though he ought to have been there on all accounts: I cannot think why he was absent."

"Depend upon it your view holds good in his case," returned Herbert, to tease him, "if in no other. If ever man was in love, Harry Motcombe is."

"You are quite wrong," said Trevanion, half annoyed; "you hazarded that idea once before, but I have seen no sign of it."

"Have you not? Then you do not read the signs of the complaint as sagaciously as your conversation during the last quarter of an hour would lead me to believe. When I first threw out the idea, it was a random one, and merely founded on my knowledge of human nature in general. Since then I have observed,—mind, what I say is no tittle-tattle, nor any betrayal of confidence; it is only an opinion, though a positive one, formed from observation;—Harry Motcombe is in love, and very much in love, too."

"Well, I am sorry to hear it," said Trevanion, with impatience, though he still disbelieved it: "I always hoped that Motcombe was too conscientiously devoted to his calling ever to marry—ever to form fresh earthly ties."

"I never said a word about his marrying; I should rather say he would not marry: but for all that, I say he is in love, hopelessly in love."

"Nor in that can I agree with you," returned the Curate: "Motcombe, with his attractions, is not a man to love in vain. There are few women with

affections disengaged who would not love him in return."

"There, again, you are making me mean more than I said," replied Herbert, stirring up his tea with a half comical relish at his companion's mystification, which the other did not perceive: "I should say that the lady did love him in return: I have no doubt of it."

"You amaze me. What, then, is to prevent them marrying? Oh! I see we agree in the main point: you mean that he loves, and is loved in return; but that he loves hopelessly, in that he loves against his convictions of his duty as a priest!"

"Oh! no, indeed I don't," said Herbert, with all his humour in his eyes; "nothing of the sort: and once for all I may tell you, Trevanion, that I do not agree with your views on 'celibacy of the priesthood;' not even in that view which recommends it only as the higher duty of their office. I do not agree, either, that because the Church of England left it open to her priests to marry, she did so out of regard to the weaknesses of those among them who think it necessary for their comfort, while at the same time she inculcates its abnegation to all. I do not agree in any of this. Such a position is a mere idea, and cannot be supported by proof, historical or otherwise. I do not wish to discuss the question,—at least not now; I only mention so much to let you know what I think: I freely allow the singlemindedness of your view; and I allow that much mischief is done by imprudent and hasty marriages among the clergy; but the same rules on that point which guide the

laity will apply to them; it wants no higher line of conduct. The reformed Church allows her priests to marry, repealing that rule of the unreformed Church which forbids them to do so. If a conscientious priest, in choosing his wife, consults the welfare of his parish while consulting his own happiness, he will not go far wrong. Besides this, let me say in conclusion that I think, Trevanion, that dissemination of this view of yours, and others, has a tendency to work great mischief among those who would otherwise warmly espouse the principles that all true Churchmen have so much at heart."

There was a pause, which Trevanion broke by saying, "Then I certainly do not understand what you mean by your assertion that Motcombe loves hopelessly."

"Your patience deserves an explanation," returned Herbert; "only let it be between ourselves: it is no business of mine, and I only mention it as being about a person in whom we are both much interested. As I have said, since we last had a few words on the subject I have watched our friend, and I am convinced—time will shew if I am wrong, perhaps—that Harry is in love with Miss Repton. We will suppose at the same time—what I am not inclined to dispute—that Miss Repton returns his attachment. Now what I mean by his loving hopelessly is this: Miss Repton has the seeds of that dire complaint in her which never deceives as to its result; I wish I could think them only seeds, and could hope to measure the result by years. All this she knows as well as you or I. And you have only to remember her high religious

principles to be convinced that she will never consent to marry any one."

A light seemed to break on Trevanion. Though not one word of this had ever crossed his imagination, he could not question its probability; and for a moment his disappointment on Motcombe's account gave place to compassion and sympathy on Frederica's. Treating for a time his former convictions as groundless, he turned his thoughts at once to her.—Was it so impossible for her to marry?

"She is not so very ill as all that," he said; "not so ill as to shut out hope of a permanent recovery, even from such a complaint as is feared to be hers. I have understood, too, that where the symptoms are mere symptoms, perfect re-establishment to health has been accelerated by a matrimonial engagement."

"Such were the ideas of the last generation," said Herbert, "when delaying the result—for it could be no more—was the only thought of those concerned. Now-a-days people look to the sin of propagating this scourge; and young people themselves to that of forming early ties on the brink of eternity."

"True: but you argue as if Miss Repton were anything more than delicate."

"Miss Repton better knows her own state than you or I. To me there is quite enough cause for dread."

"But there is also strong ground for believing that Motcombe is not in love at all," said Trevanion, now anxiously falling back on his old hope.

"Nay, Trevanion, it is not as you would have it; and yet be not despondent. My view, if it demolishes the

high, exalted standard of principle which you would attribute to our friend attributes one not less self-denying, not less holy, to this weak and fragile girl."

Herbert spoke in those deep, nervous tones which he used when he felt; and Trevanion could not help acknowledging the reproof. His own view, after all, was one not shared by all. While Frederica's high principle, if she acted on it, as Herbert seemed to think, admitted of no question, it was unapproachable in its purity and excellence;—it was unworthy, too, in him to think that that high self-sacrifice which he would impute to Motcombe might not exist in others as well as in the priest.

Again there was a silence, during which Trevanion almost accustomed himself to think that it must be as Herbert supposed it; and his mind, ever indulgent, began to look round for hope of a happy issue for those who, for their goodness, in his idea deserved so much.

"But if Miss Repton mended—she is not ill now—if she mended, do you think all hopes of a happy issue shut out?" he asked.

"Who can say," replied Herbert, "what the future may bring forth? We are speaking of prospects as they look, or as we are supposing them to look, now;—in life, a change so often comes over the scene, that no man can do more. At present we have the attachment, the complaint of the one, its almost invariable result, and the high principles of the two: quite enough to speak with tolerable precision."

Trevanion sighed. "'We have no abiding city,'" he said, softly.

Breakfast was finished, and on rising, Herbert said,

"I am going down to Castle Bank, to see some fields which Mr. Harbottle has some new scheme for draining, when the weather gets warm enough. Will you come over and dine with me to-night, at Bickerton?"

"If you are alone."

"And why not if I ask some one else?"

"Because I shall not get away in that case until late, and I have so much to do."

"Very well; I will be alone. I did not intend to ask any one else; for the fact is, I have a case of some curious books from town, and I want to ask your opinion on them."

"You pay me a great compliment," said Trevanion, much pleased; "and I will be sure to be there."

The day passed on, and towards the afternoon got bleak and threatening. Herbert, after spending the morning at Castle Bank, retraced his steps to Bickerton, calling nowhere else. He felt dull and out of spirits:—perhaps the nature of the day affected him; perhaps he, too, felt in some degree the listlessness generally consequent on such gaieties as those of the preceding night; perhaps it was merely an access of the old brooding humour which sometimes took him. He did not care to analyse it, and most likely he would have refused to do so had he cared. There was so much of his past life that seemed unsatisfactory that he had given up the retrospect as much as possible. He began to think he had been an empty dreamer, when he ought really to have been grappling with facts and difficulties. To be sure, the wildest dream he ever indulged never came up to what had in reality come to pass; but that made him the more fear the foible.

For nothing shews us so much the emptiness of fancy as the realization of an unexpected, most improbable fact. So he turned to his library, now completed in everything, save in those fresh but gradual additions to its shelves which are the literary man's constant delight; and thus he soon found the hours pass swiftly by in undisturbed intellectual repose.

Meanwhile the wind whistled around the angles of the building, and the sleet scudded wildly across the park; and, despite of his reading and his resolution, Herbert felt the day upon him. Irresistibly it lowered the tone of his spirits; and when Trevanion arrived to dinner, though the shutters were closed, and bright log-fires were sparkling and sputtering on the hearths, he certainly felt more inclined to be grave and solemn in his thoughts and discourse, than to pass a lively, social evening.

With Trevanion it was just the reverse. Though he, as we shall see by-and-bye, had had good cause to be depressed and pained, which Herbert had not, yet the drive in a gig up to Bickerton, through the blustering elements, had rather enlivened him. There was something so outrageous in the way in which the wind had almost blown the vehicle over, that he felt inclined to laugh; and now the sight of the fires, and the neat appointments of everything in Herbert's household, rather served to rouse and cheer him.

"How it snows!" he said, with the air of a man who is congratulating himself on the fact.

"Yes, it is a vile day," said Herbert, testily: "you had better stay here all night."

"Why, I only came on condition I might go early."

"True, I forgot. The fact is, moping in-doors all the afternoon has made me quite stupid."

"Many is the party who would have been glad to have been moping in-doors, nevertheless, such a night as this," replied Trevanion: "I for one."

"Have you been out in it? What have you been doing?"

"Nothing out of the common. I have been out on the business of my calling; but out, nevertheless."

"Seen any one in particular?"

"Yes; I have seen—ah! that reminds me—what the sight of you and that bright fire had almost put out of my head—of something that will interest you; but let us put it off till after dinner;" and Trevanion looked as sad as Herbert himself. The two soon, however, forgot present discomforts in the inspection of the volumes Herbert had invited the curate to see, which, with the remarks arising thereupon, occupied the two pleasantly till dinner-time.

After the cloth had been removed, and the servants had disappeared, Trevanion said, "You remember what we were talking about this morning?"

Herbert nodded.

"What you said then," continued the Curate, "seems now to me as if intended to prepare me for what was soon to occur. Miss Repton is seriously ill."

Herbert gave a start, and then said, under his breath, "So soon!"

"I met Dr. Crompton this afternoon, and though he said little, he seemed very uneasy about it."

"Did he mention any particulars of her indisposition?"

"He said something about her spitting blood too much, and about her being all wrong."

"Did he apprehend immediate danger?"

"I asked him, and he did not state that he did not."

"Have you seen Motcombe?"

"No; and I thought it best to avoid seeing him. But something else the Doctor said which struck me, and which I treasured up to mention to you. Madame d'Aulaincourt had been telling him that Miss Repton would wish to see one of us; and he, taking it for granted it would be Motcombe, suggested to me that I should prepare him for the fact."

"Why should he take it for granted that it would be Motcombe?"

"Well, I hardly know how to answer that question. There is no reason why one should be preferred to the other where neither is specified by the party requiring him. But though Mr. Strong is deservedly popular, it is more from his sterling qualities as a gentleman than as a clergyman, if I may be allowed to say so. Besides, I rather think that Motcombe's first introduction to the d'Aulaincourts arose from some such requirement as the present."

"If that is so, he must prepare himself for being called upon now," said Herbert; "though one would suppose that the young lady would spare him the trial if she could. But tell me, all this sounds very like confession. It must have a very ugly look in Madame d'Aulaincourt's eyes, who, if I mistake not, either you or Harry told me was very Evangelical in her tendencies."

"It seems strange, does it not?" replied Trevanion.

"The explanation I fancy to be this. Madame d'Aulaincourt, though she has Calvinistic views herself, is, for a wonder, an exceedingly tolerant, as well as diffident, person on such subjects, and would constrain no one—not her own child even—to view them as she herself does."

"What a bright example to hold up to Mr. Harbottle."

"True: you should hold up the example yourself," said Trevanion, slily. "Well, as I was going to say, she looks upon Frederica as not her own child, except on trust; and one of those trusts is to leave her religious convictions as her own mother, if alive, would have left them."

"The effect of which is," interrupted Herbert, "that Miss Repton, like a good Churchwoman, takes the 'ghostly counsel and advice' of the clergy at stated intervals. Well, this is all very right; but in the present instance, if it is as I suspect, Mr. Strong must be the person employed. Harry will refuse; mark my words."

"I really think you are premature," said Trevanion: you argue as positively as if you had proof of an attachment between them."

"I have no proof," replied Herbert: "but let this be the test: if Motcombe goes, except as a mere friend, I shall think myself wrong."

"And if Strong is sent for, I will allow you right," said Trevanion: "However, I must do what Dr. Crompton wished; I will drop in upon him as I go home."

"Poor Harry!" said Herbert.

"You think it will be a bitter trial," remarked the Curate.

"Such a trial as no one who has not loved can in the faintest degree picture: and with him the more severe, because he has few, if any, confidants. His intimacies are never friendships. None suffer in such cases so much as those gloomy, brooding hearts which hug the stroke, and go swelling and swelling over it till they are ready to burst. And I fancy they do break sometimes."

Trevanion looked at him with some curiosity, in the hope that he would go on. There was something in this half-romantic, half-philosophising character, that he would have liked to have seen unrolled and displayed. But Herbert, after looking intently at the fire in silence for some minutes, only kicked a half-expiring log till the sparks flew in a volley from it, while he repeated in the same tone, but in a little lower key, "Poor Harry!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE FADING ROSE.

She faded,—and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender-kind,—
And griev'd for those she left behind:
With all the while a cheek whose bloom
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sank away
As a departing rainbow's ray;
An eye of most transparent light.—BYRON.

It was but too true. The morning after the ball Frederica Repton's malady shewed itself in its real colours. It is not for us to describe how. In Dr. Crompton's professional words, "All the mischief which he had suspected to be brewing, broke out;" and the young rose's days were now only to be measured by months and weeks. The blow, though it had been a source of constant apprehension to her for more than two years, fell heavily upon Madame d'Aulaincourt. Frederica was the sole legacy of a beloved sister. She came to her a portionless orphan; she was about to be taken from her a priceless treasure. The case was hard indeed. All the loving aunt's care had been lavished upon one whom she could not have cherished more had she been that one's mother. She had looked for no return for the love she had spent on the gift, and yet it had not only repaid her, but had created a debt rather on her own side, to be repaid, which Death, alas!

would not give her time to discharge. And yet was it unreasonable? What call have such as Frederica Repton to remain here on earth? Look around, reader, on the scenes of cruelty, and extravagance, and thoughtlessness, and vice in this world; regard for a few moments the best among us upon their trial here for the judgment to come, and say, what reason had Frederica to tarry among such as these? Her place is not with us; it is meet that she should go to her own—to be with others like her. No; it is not for us to pity her; she goes unshackled, free to joy, to bliss. But those whose hearts she gladdened, whose home she cheered, whom by her example she taught,—them we may pity; while we ourselves may learn to lay to heart our own worthlessness, when placed in comparison with such as her.

As might be expected from the insidious nature of her malady, in about a week Frederica Repton rallied, and was able to sit up and to be cheerful, and to see those of her friends who were nearest and dearest to her, and to raise hopes which those who knew better recognised only as sure signs of the approaching end. It was at this time that the solution of the question which had agitated Herbert and Trevanion on the day after the ball was to take place. Motcombe had received the news of Miss Repton's illness with deep concern, but with no greater outward emotion than might have been displayed by those gentlemen themselves. He called daily to make enquiries at Kemp; but so did others. As Herbert had remarked, he had no *confidant*, his intimacies were never friendships; and whatever grief touched his heart, it touched it alone; he

took no partner to his sorrow. But the question was now to be solved. A letter, requesting Mr. Motcombe's attendance at Kemp, on Miss Repton's account, arrived in little more than a week from the day of the ball. The tenor of the answer sent by Motcombe was not known to the two disputants for some days later, and even then only the general effect of it; but the reader may be put in possession of it at once. Motcombe said that he would do himself the honour of calling on Miss Repton, to explain his reasons why his services as her spiritual adviser would, in the present instance, be advantageously exchanged for those of Mr. Strong, or of some other godly and discreet priest; but he should like Madame d'Aulaincourt to understand, before he made the visit in question, that it was with that view alone. Madame d'Aulaincourt, of course, did not know what to make of Mr. Motcombe's objections; but as she had, on former occasions, declared herself unable to understand the motives or authority for much of the conduct of the High-Church party, it is just possible that she ascribed her perplexity to the same dulness of comprehension in the present instance. At present, she had but one object in view, namely, to gratify the faintest breath of a wish uttered by her niece, and as she signified her desire of seeing the young Curate on the terms mentioned in his note, a message to that effect had been sent into the town, and Motcombe attended on the following morning. Before going into the particulars of that visit, we may mention that Mr. Strong was called in on the succeeding day; so that Herbert's suspicions received confirm-

ation, and Trevanion, with a sigh, owned himself a convert to them.

Frederica received Henry Motcombe in a sort of *boudoir* up-stairs, which had been fitted up with every comfort for her ease. She was sitting up, dressed as usual; but as if to give a more unearthly effect to her appearance, already unsubstantial enough, she was dressed in a very pale morning dress. The Curate was prepared to be shocked, and probably had armed himself at all points against any exhibition of his distress. But he was hardly prepared for such a wreck as that which appeared before him in one short week. Her eyes were the same,—more lovely, perhaps, than ever;—the silken brown hair, braided so closely to her forehead, never shewed the beauty of its texture more strikingly; the dear, gentle smile, so winning in its softness, greeted him as heretofore; but the face, the figure, the cheeks, seemed all shrunk. The case that enshrined the pure spirit appeared worn out, and useless to retain the gem. Cecile d'Aulaincourt was alone with her cousin when he entered, and she in a few minutes left them together. The moment she was gone, Frederica held out her hand to him, with the words—"Harry, was it not for the best?" He sat down on a seat beside the large arm-chair in which she rested, surrounded by pillows, and took the hand tendered to him, but he could hardly trust himself to answer. There was a moment's silence, during which his eyes were fixed upon the hand, while she gazed on him with a mixed look of pity and affection that was almost angelic. "Say, Harry, that it was for the best."

"How can I say so?" he replied, at last, in a voice which Herbert or Trevanion would hardly have recognised as his: "Frederica, had you been mine when I asked, none of this might have happened: my care, the comfort of our home, instead of the mad recklessness of that ball, would have averted the whole."

"Oh no, they would not," she replied, with a mournful shake of the head: "it perhaps would have killed me sooner to think what sorrow would in that case have been in store for you. Take courage," she said, softly, for his distress was great.

"I am sure I did right," she continued, in a low tone: "it was not inclination, but what I knew *I ought* to do, that swayed me; and I feel that it was for the welfare of us both now."

"No, Frederica; when I remember how strong and well you were then, I cannot think so. Even now there is hope. You will recover from this attack—Dr. Crompton says that nothing is more probable; you will recover from this attack."

"Which is but the forerunner of another more severe, come when it will. Oh! Harry, do not torture me: not Dr. Crompton, nor any one else, knows half so well my real state as I do myself. The event has proved that already. At all events, now I am tranquil and resigned; were I your wife, my last moments would be moments of wretchedness and despair, to think of our parting and of your grief."

"And do you not think of them now?"

"Of course I do," she said, eagerly; "but there is a wide difference between the two cases. Perhaps then, my love of earth might endanger my chance of

gaining what is to come. Even now, Harry, for your sake, I am grieving to go."

He threw his arm round her for a moment, and pressed her to him. After a few seconds she continued: "Make me not, then, weaker than I am. I sent for you to ask you to teach, to strengthen me, to prepare my poor earthly soul, still clinging to the passions of its prison-house, how to soar above to that home which awaits it."

"Me!" said Henry, somewhat wildly; "I can do none of this. I am not worthy to teach so pure, so holy a spirit. No, Frederica, I cannot do this; nor do I think, in our relative positions, that it would be right for me to essay to do it. So far from being your confessor, your adviser, so far from leading you to heaven, I should be teaching you, like myself, to murmur and repine."

"And yet I had hoped this," continued Frederica, sadly; "and I had hoped still further, that I might have been able to lead *your* poor stricken soul, Harry, to resignation and meekness."

"Oh! do that still, dear girl. I cannot come to you as your priest. It would not be right, even if I could so far forget my poor humanity as to be equal to it. But if for that reason I am to be shut out from your presence, that will be a blow indeed."

"Nay, you need not fear that; I will see you whenever I can. But if you come only as some other stranger, what excuse am I to give my aunt?"

"Why not tell her what has passed between us? Tell her how I have asked, and why you refused. She is so good—"

"That it would half kill her to think that another tie has to be broken. Yes, Harry, it is a tie, my love for you," (he held her hand fondly between both of his); "it is a tie to which I did so cling, for though in my own heart I knew what was coming, yet at times fancy would step in, and, yes—I did hope too." A few tears fell at this, but she brushed them resolutely away. "I would spare my dear aunt the knowledge of our attachment, if I could, for this reason only. Neither you nor I, Harry, have had any other reason to conceal what has passed between us save this, that my motive for refusing to be your wife, if explained to her, would be the means of communicating to her also my own conviction of an early decease."

"But, Frederica, do not banish me altogether."

"That I will not. See here,"—and she took the flowers of the bouquet which he had given her at the ball, and which she had carefully dried and pressed in order before her,—"they have been my companions, my most intimate companions, for ten days," she said: "Shall I banish the donor?" And she raised that heavenly smile and those lustrous eyes upon him. And he drank in the look. But the pleasure cost him dear. At that fading, dying face, recollections of what might have been, of all his hopes dashed, of his broken love, all crowded on his mind; his fortitude gave way; and, with his head bowed down upon that hand, his pent-up grief broke forth. Fondly and gently, but as a superior being that had already begun to scent the heavenly air beyond, she laid her other hand consolingly, encouragingly upon his head, and in the same tones repeated her former words, "Take courage."

"How will you bear future meetings, Harry, some of which must be more painful, if you thus break down at the first? Oh! I am so thankful now that I was not led into being your wife—that my affection was not allowed to blind me to the knowledge of my fate. What would you have suffered in that case, Harry, to judge from what you suffer now? Oh! thank Him, too, for tempering the blow."

Though she spoke thus with such becoming fortitude and resignation, it was hard for her, poor girl, to restrain her own distress at her lover's sorrow. But she had acted all along from the highest principle, and nothing serves to strengthen the sufferer from his own act so much as the feeling that that act was right.

The surmise respecting herself and Mr. Henry Motcombe, communicated by Herbert to Trevanion, was very near the truth. The attachment had commenced during the previous winter but one, when Frederica was at Torquay for her health. The Curate, in the ardour of his affection and his hopes, persisted in looking upon the malady of his beloved as trifling; but she, with that quick perception of the result which seems a part of the disease, only shook her head, and both in Devonshire, and later in Bishops Lamford, when he entered on his duties in the latter town, refused all his prayers for even an engagement contingent on the improvement in her health. During all this she never concealed from him her own attachment. She was the soul of truth, and perhaps fortified by this, and sanguine as to her real state, he for a time continued to hope. But the uncertainty was a bitter trial to him; and from constant brooding over it, that

gloom which Trevanion had noticed, and had ascribed to a cause so different, fixed itself upon him. He was unhappy.

Madame d'Aulaincourt knew nothing of all this; and it was one of the brightest parts of this young girl's conduct, that when she was herself so much in need of sympathy—for the trial was a sore one to her as well—she could refuse to avail herself of it in a quarter where she knew she was so sure to find it, because she wished to spare that beloved aunt the knowledge of her own sure presentiment and conviction that the fatal issue of her malady was not far distant.

She would, if she could, have spared her aunt the disclosure altogether, but her lover's present distress, and the feeling that she had no right to keep him from her at her last moments, told her that this could not be; and when Henry was a little more composed, she acquainted him with her resolution, and the details for its execution were arranged between them. It is not our intention to enter into either of these. Poor Madame d'Aulaincourt's grief was undoubtedly aggravated by the information, which of course was strictly confined to her; while at the same time the knowledge that the same sorrow struck another besides herself, in perhaps not a less near or less sacred degree, had a salutary effect upon her. But this is only the close of January, and the end is not to be just yet to them, though we in our history are approaching it rapidly. Two months yet for her, and Henry, and Cecile, of hope and dejection, and final resignation—of what was to come;—two months of creeping days and hours, to watch the lamp of life flickering, and the sainted form

wasting, and the pure spirit struggling, and yet struggling gently, to get free.

* * * * *

Meanwhile the improvements at Lamm's Ferry were in full progress. Herbert was desirous of bestowing some little taste upon them, at the same time that his prime object was public utility, and the advancing of Christ's cause. With a certain amount of difficulty he had ejected the tenants from a cluster of four houses belonging to him, and induced them to take up their abodes in much newer, better, and cleaner domiciles, which he provided for them at some considerable detriment to his own pocket;—we say with difficulty, for there are few things more difficult in this world than to persuade people to do things which are really for their own benefit, if at the same time by not doing them some inconvenience will accrue to other people. However, the difficulty was in due time got over. Herbert never rested in the matter; and what with cajoling, coaxing, bribing, and reasoning too, where it was of any use, managed to gain his object;—the scolding was done to perfection by Mr. Strong. The new chapel-school, at least so far as it was new, was to be finished about the commencement of April; and about that time Herbert proposed to the d'Aulaincourts, the Dillwyns, Miss Percy, and one or two others, to form a party to go over and view them, and thence to adjourn to Bickerton to rest and luncheon. About this time, then, a party consisting of the above, excepting Madame d'Aulaincourt and her niece—Cecile was sent to represent them—together with Trevanion, some of the Har-

bottles, and two of the spinster old maids, the Miss Bamptons, found themselves at Lamm's Ferry, for the object already described.

After the inspection had been made, and approval passed, and improvements suggested, and enquiries answered, and after the ventilation of the building had been discussed, and the process of warming it canvassed,—in all of which Mr. Strong was characteristically dictatorial, and Mr. Harbottle was characteristically suspicious,—the party turned their thoughts to the eatables which were awaiting them at Bickerton. Most of the visitors, being either lazy or hungry, preferred proceeding thither in their carriages, but some few, including Mrs. Harbottle, one of her daughters, Cecile, and Christina Percy, yielded to Herbert's request to let him shew them a new terrace he was going to open, commanding a delightful view over the Ouse; and so, accompanied by Trevanion, they set forth for that purpose through the park. The walk, though long, was pleasant, the weather being fine for the time of year. After a little the whole party, excepting Christina and Herbert, got on some way in front, and for a considerable part of the walk these two were left to themselves. Perhaps there was no effort made to avoid this on the part of Mrs. Harbottle and those with her, from the idea which by this time prevailed very generally in Lamford, that Christina Percy was to be the new mistress of Bickerton. This impression had been gradually gaining ground since the Lamford ball; and as neither Herbert nor the young lady in the least altered their conduct to each other from the prevalence of the

report, which, one would suppose, they both of them must have heard, the matter had got to be talked about as a thing that "would be." To be sure, some of the ladies had wondered that Herbert should not have sought an alliance with some county family which would turn his position from that of a *parvenu* into an acknowledged county man; but then they could not help allowing that "dear Christina was an excellent creature, and that it was high time she was married." Christina and Herbert were certainly, to all appearance, well enough with each other. Her admiration was evident enough. His manners, on the other hand, were always so easy and unembarrassed with every one, that it was not so easy to say how he felt. He certainly preferred her society to that of any other girl in the place, and always sought it on every available opportunity. Nothing, therefore, was thought of their lagging behind on the present occasion; and they, perhaps from the fact that the same thing had happened before, or from being occupied by each other's conversation, did not seem to see anything extraordinary in the circumstance. And so they went sauntering on, forgetful of the others.

"What do you think of that improvement?" said he, pointing to some change recently made.

"I do not approve of the ruthless way you sacrifice handsome trees to gain points of view," was the decisive answer.

"Don't you? I should have thought better of you. The true lover of the beautiful is the lover of nature on its most extensive scale. I cannot imagine, nor could you, if you knew yourself, such a one being

content with a prospect bounded by a tree, however pretty, as long as his vision and his mind are large enough to grasp one farther beyond."

"Supposing the latter to command a factory, or a railway chimney?" suggested Christina.

"You are begging a question which the present instance will not grant; there are neither here."

"Not at present. But who can tell how long it will be before there are?" was the reply: "the furthest land our eye can reach is not yours. Suppose them to rise suddenly there, you will find it difficult at once to replace yon two poor trees."

"You think me hasty in my alterations."

"I think you more wanting in forethought than I should have expected of you; besides, I am not sure that the widest space is in the long run the most pleasing prospect. Edward Wordsworth, who once thought that all this was his, and who was not deficient in a capricious sort of love of nature, hasty and thoughtless as he is, would have hesitated before he doomed those trees."

Herbert paused for a moment, then said, "Tell me something about this man Wordsworth: you were going to do so once before, but something interrupted you. What is the secret of his failing in life? Is he headstrong, or naturally vicious, or imprudent, or only unfortunate?"

"It is hard to be impartial and say correctly," replied Christina: "he may have a tendency to all the first three, without being radically incurable. I would rather not accuse, however. To arrive at an indulgent estimate of him, you can bear in mind that he has

been wild, that some of his companions are not of the best, and that his habits are unsettled: that will be quite enough to say against him. And I will tell you all I know that can be said in excuse of the worst."

"A fine mode of procedure against a criminal, in truth," said Herbert: "I would not mind being tried on such a plan."

"That is, if I am to defend you;—you mean that, though you forgot to add it."

"Of course: but go on, I am impatient."

"Edward Wordsworth is one of eight children, all of whom, but himself and one other, are or were daughters. His parents were well off, and he was brought up in affluence. But such affluence as his home afforded came to be a mere pittance when divided equally among the children. Edward's share was certainly not sufficient to support him without a profession bringing in a fair income, which at his father's death he had not. His education was a gentleman's education, but not an education which would put him into any business immediately bringing in the means of living as he had been accustomed to live. You will say that he should have turned his back upon first hopes, and have adapted his prospects to his present means; for what reason I will not take upon myself to say, but he did not, and hence at the outset he met with difficulty and disappointment. Do I make myself understood?"

"Perfectly. Pray go on."

"Edward and his brother were respectively the eldest and the youngest of the eight children, having six sisters between them. There was one other son,

who would rank just midway between them, who died when Edward was at Cambridge. With so fine a family,—you will laugh at what I am going to say, but it is nevertheless true,—with so fine a family of his own, old Mr. Wordsworth was always hankering after other people's children, of whom he as good as adopted no less than three."

"What do you mean by as good as adopted?"

"Why each of them had prospects of some sort of their own. The first was a young orphan when he was taken into Mr. Wordsworth's family, but some lucky aunt died afterwards and he became independent. The others were introduced therein at a later period of their lives. But what I would explain is, that Mr. Wordsworth treated them all, both with regard to their prospects and themselves, with a preference, a marked preference to that which he exhibited towards his own children."

"But what was his ostensible object in doing this?"

"One may fancy an excuse in the case of the first, pity for its forlorn state; besides that, only two children were born to himself at the time he befriended that one. The other two, however, he did not take up till all his family had come. The first married his eldest daughter. He adopted the second—I still use the word—on the ground that he was necessary to him in the scientific work in which he was constantly engaged. The second married, in course of years, another daughter; and then the third came, who—"

"Married another daughter, I suppose," said Herbert.

"Precisely so."

"Rich!" said Herbert, with a burst of hearty laughter: "Why, the old gentleman's game is clear enough. He only wanted to make sure of husbands for his daughters."

"I really do not think that he cared for any of his daughters sufficiently to take that trouble. Besides, the same tendency ran in other members of his family. His own brother, who had children also, left one clear half of his fortune, in small legacies, to young people whom he had taken up and patronised at various times during his life. Moreover, he gained nothing to speak of by the result: none of these matches were worth seeking, nor the gentlemen, any of them, so fascinating as to make them desirable husbands. But what I am coming to is the practical result of all this. Old Mr. Wordsworth's conduct established the system of preference in his family. The interlopers very soon became but little else than spies upon his own legitimate children—upon those whose bread they ate, and whose lot, as it were, they shared. These latter, in their turn, did not lose the lesson thus afforded them. Their object in life, as they grew up, seemed to be that each should get for himself or herself that preference which was accorded to strangers; and from overreaching, or trying to overreach, the objectionable parties, they came soon to learn to overreach each other. There never was a particle of brotherly or sisterly feeling among them. To get the upper hand with papa was the first aim; and I have no doubt but the marriages with his favourites from time to time were, in their eyes, but steps to the better carrying out of this plan."

"A pretty family, indeed!" said Herbert.

"Never was there a more unhappy one," continued Christina. "Can you wonder that Edward Wordsworth shunned his home, or that he looked for amusement, relaxation, and employment in the world?"

"I see: and so it all worked a conclusion which the parents will have to answer for some day," said Herbert.

"Yes: but I tell you it might not have worked so ill, but for one other reason. There are good, and honourable, and beneficial ties to be formed in the world, besides bad ones. But Edward lacked fixed moral principle; he did not know what it was. His family and himself had been brought up in that parrot-like acquisition of the Catechism, and in that patronising attendance at one divine service in a week, which was so common a few years ago. But he never had had a course of practical virtue brought before his eyes,—his home could not furnish it."

"You mean, that he had never had his attention called to a course of 'religion in common life.'"

"I do. He went into life with these drawbacks—careless, gay, and fond of pleasure. The result is not so unnatural."

"No," said Herbert, after a pause: "If he is not radically unprincipled, he deserves much indulgence on the grounds you have stated. But after all, Miss Percy, the true test of all this is whether a man is willing to shew himself innocent of all charges against him when opportunity offers. Will he reform? If he has been idle from circumstances, and not from an inveterate tendency that way, will he shew this practically now that he has work offered him? If he has been wild and dissipated from bad education, will he try and break his chains now that he has felt their

bitterness, and that opportunity gives him a chance of doing so? In such a case, a man may be forgiven everything. And this is Mr. Wordsworth's case, if he will but make it so. By heavens! I would at one time of my life have given everything for such a prospect as the one which lies before him. Honourable occupation, and a beautiful, high-souled girl waiting to crown his efforts in the distance."

"That is a part of the picture which I least like to look upon," said Christina: "I cannot think that such would be a happy marriage, let him reform to the utmost; their tempers are so unsuited to each other."

"What! do you believe in that old dogma of the world?"

"Do not you?" returned the lady, surprised.

"Not in the way the world does. How many marriages do we not see bemourned at their outset on the ground of inequality of temper, which turn out to be among the few happy ones; and how many others just the reverse! Nicanor marries Nerissa: they are both young and ardent—both like the same thing—have the same tastes, the same refined education, the same sympathies: their life is one continual quarrel. Orlando there, so clever, so well-informed, with such a sympathy for knowledge, marries that stupid girl Jessica, who has not a thought for any of these things, and who never opens a book: through twenty years they have never known a day of domestic infelicity. How do you account for this?"

"By saying that no rule on the subject will hold good in all cases."

"Just so: and therefore apply your own remark to Wordsworth's and Miss Deane's case, as well as to that of others."

"But surely one may have a fair idea of the result in most cases."

"You may; but it is as likely to be wrong as not. The best chance for happiness, in my notion, is dissimilarity in temper: where the one is deficient, the other can supply. Hence it is that such a case as Orlando and Jessica's turns out so well. But even this is mere guess. Oh, no! whenever I hear people say, 'Oh, she is so unsuited to him!' I am prepared to look for a happy issue. Depend upon it that, as often as not, young people, if they are not mere boy and girl, and if their engagement is of long enough standing to let them into the knowledge of each other fairly, know as well as any whether they are suited to each other; and if they are wrong, disinterested judges turn out to be wrong just as often. Such a girl as Miss Deane would not love, unless there was a strong sympathy to attract."

Christina did not agree. But they had arrived at the spot where the new terrace was to be; and the rest of the party had waited till they came up.

CHAPTER XVI.

DELUSION.

And Dreamland folk do love their dead,
For every mound I saw
Had flowers, and wreaths, and garlands such
As painters love to draw.
I asked what seeds made such fair fruits,
And scarce I trust my ears—
The Dreamland folk averred such things
Do only grow from—tears. COXE.

THE flowers appear on the earth, and the time of singing of the birds is come[a]." It is the month of May; Nature is in her new attire; gladness and joy is in the heart of man; every tree, every flower rejoices in its new youth of life: the lambs in the fields, the feathered songsters in the hedgerows, the glittering insects on the blades of grass, tell of new, throbbing animation,—to last, perchance, like all life on earth, but for a little, but still young, and yet to live. All, save one here in Lamford. What says that sad toll booming from the old church over the wide fields, which all the while chirp with youthful joy? Frederica Repton has passed to her resting-place! While all else has been springing into life, she has been decaying into death; while all other flowers are bursting from the bud, the pale rose has been fading

[a] Song of Solomon, ii. 12.

from her stalk;—by degrees, in truth, by slow degrees; each petal one by one, robbing the flower of one further beauty, as they severally fell—each gently, softly, without a struggle to remain behind; and the last, it hung fluttering so long, that imagination began to picture that it might hold through till the autumn, when other flowers failed also. But it, too, is gone, and nought but the lifeless stalk is left.

Nature has provided Frederica's obsequies with a choral service. Never have birds sung so blithely as over the path across which the mourners pass with her remains. Nature too smiles—not without reason; she smiles at the pure spirit's welcome to her home.

And now the sod is turned, the little mound is formed, and the flowers that grow from mourners' tears in rich profusion grace the spot, while many a sorrowing eye drops homage over the ground hallowed by the presence of her loved remains.

We must pass over a few days—say little more than a week—after this, to bring our readers onward with our tale.

Herbert Capel, as we have before intimated, expected during this month an intimate friend to come over to Bickerton on a visit to him; and the day has at length arrived which is to see this auspicious event. During the morning Herbert has been at Castle Bank; he is to return through the town to Motcombe's lodgings, where an open carriage is to meet him, and he is then to drive to the railway, to receive the Rev. Edwin Dacre, the friend he expects.

The day was very lovely; and his shortest course on foot from Castle Bank lay through the fields, and

through the churchyard. He had hitherto avoided the latter, from a fear of intruding on the mourners round Frederica's grave; but more than a week had elapsed, and besides, he wished to look at it himself, and everything joining to invite him, he took that road. On entering the churchyard, he half repented of the step he had taken, for some one was at the grave now: but a little observation assured him;—it was Christina Percy, from the figure, and he knew that his presence would not be disagreeable to her. He moved over the grass slowly, and was beside her for some little time before she perceived him. At last she became aware of his presence, and looked up with a sad smile, but made at first no remark. Herbert followed the direction of her eyes, as they turned again on to the grave. It was plentifully bedecked with wreaths and bouquets, some of rare and rich flowers, others of those of a commoner and wilder sort, but not less appropriate—for Frederica was one of Nature's children; and he found himself assigning each offering to the different hands which the flowers in them seemed to designate as having placed them there. There was the evidence of Cecile's impetuous grief, and Christina's mature and tempered sorrow, answering to the tears that had fallen not less hot and bitter, but slower and with meeker roll; there was the sparkling gush of Bella Dillwyn's guileless sympathy —there the blank distress of the widowed aunt. All this Herbert's fancy pictured to him, as he tried to read the floral emblems of love and mourning, even to one wreath of ivy-leaves, without a flower or colour, which told the grief of one other bereaved heart.

Christina looked up again. "Poor Frederica!" she said.

"Poor ———" said Herbert, pointing to the ivy-wreath. He did not fill up the sentence.

Christina caught the idea in a second. "Whose can it be?" she said, looking him intently in the face.

"Some seared and blighted heart's, Christina," he replied, solemnly.

The blood rushed into her cheeks, for this was the first time he had called her by her Christian name: but recovering herself, she asked, "And was it, then, so? Had poor Freddy an earthly love to disturb her last moments?"

"Perhaps it did not disturb them: perhaps it cast a halo over those moments. A pure love, like her's, though earthly, may well do that."

"And *he*—did he come to Lamford to see her? You who know everything, know that. Tell me: did she see him before she died?"

"Of course she did: he never left Lamford."

She looked at him in perplexity, but supposing it would be asking him to break confidence, she did not, burning as she was to know more, like to press him further on the subject.

"How are Madame d'Aulaincourt and her daughter?" he said, after a pause: "you see them daily."

"Cecile is better," was the reply: "her impetuous nature broke forth severely at first. Madame d'Aulaincourt's sorrow lies deeper, but she carries it well."

"Dear, good woman!" said Herbert, warmly: "I pity her from my heart."

There was something so brave and manly in this speech, that Christina could not help turning her eyes to the speaker. She thought he had never looked to such advantage as he did then.

"Cecile is a fine little girl, but I should think she was a bad comforter," he said again, after a pause.

"She is not to be alone," replied Christina: "her grief was at first so violent, that Madame d'Aulaincourt determined to ask her little friend that stayed with her last year to come down again at once—the Mignonette I spoke of, you remember. She wrote to Bramsholme a day or two ago."

"Bramsholme!" said Herbert, with something very like a start.

"Yes, Bramsholme in Somersetshire. Do you know it?"

"I rather think I do," said Herbert, slowly, as a flood of recollections came pouring into his heart: "Bramsholme! the village where the blue-bells grow."

"Dear me! is it peculiar in that respect?" said Christina, laughing.

"No, I believe not," replied Herbert, joining in the laugh, and regaining his old manner: "It is a name I gave the place when I was there, because of the quantity of wild-flowers with which, during the spring of the year, the country around it abounds: I never saw such a variety in my life, though the idea in my mind was that they were all blue."

"You must have been in love then," replied Christina, archly.

"I don't see that," returned Herbert, who, near as the guess was, was too adroit to be thrown off his

guard: "in that case, everything would be *couleur de rose*, not blue."

"But tell me about the village 'where the blue-bells grow.' It sounds very absurd. Do you know it well?"

"Very well."

"Then you must know Mignonette."

"I suppose so, if she has lived there any time."

He now knew well what was coming, though he kept his countenance with marvellous success.

"Her name is Miss Melton; she is the daughter of the clergyman there."

"Miss Melton," he said: "indeed! then is it Miss Melton that has eclipsed, in some people's eyes, all the Lamford beauties?"

"Eclipsed!" repeated Christina: "I hardly know that she has eclipsed us: she ranked with us."

"Oh! do not feel piqued," replied Herbert: "In beauty I think she can come up to none of you."

"But in other qualities you consider her superior. That is what you were going to say."

"Indeed I was not going to give an opinion upon her other qualities at all," returned Herbert, calmly; "for the simple reason that it is three years since I last saw her."

Christina felt gratified at this. Though it was not part of her character to be jealous, she may be pardoned, considering the position with regard to Herbert which common report assigned to her, if she felt uneasiness at an acquaintance with one who, in Lamford, would be thought a very dangerous rival.

"She must have been quite a child then."

"She was between eighteen and nineteen, I believe," was the careless reply.

They parted soon after this; Herbert to drive off for his friend Edwin Dacre, after a call at Henry Motcombe's, whom he was anxious to draw into some sort of society, if he could, with the view of diverting the profound but secret grief which he could see was preying upon him; while Christina betook herself to Kemp, to see if she could be of use to Madame d'Aulaincourt or Cecile.

Kemp was now in great beauty—just that sort of beauty which the deceased girl most loved to dwell upon; and this fact, at nearly every hour of the day, opened some fresh source of grief to the two mourners left behind. Madame d'Aulaincourt, on her side, never made any allusion to the sad loss that had befallen her, though circumstances were every moment bringing it to her recollection, and forcing it on her notice; but Cecile, that child of impulse, put no such constraint upon herself; and the continual—"Oh, Mamma!" which commenced every sentence that bore allusion to Frederica, and the rush of tears to the eyes at every familiar circumstance or object which recalled her lost cousin, must have been as painful to the mother as her own carefully subdued thoughts. Yet she never tried to restrain her child: it seemed as natural that Cecile should thus express her sorrow, as it was to herself to cover and conceal hers.

Christina Percy, indeed, was a real sympathizer. She never, it is true, expressed condolence in words; but there was that in the nervous pressure of her soft, fair hand, and in the honest pity of her brave,

brown eye, which brought a mine of comfort to the wounded soul. Her calm look of wonder, too, always availed to check an unlucky speech of Cecile's, where others would have frowned in vain.

It may not seem unnatural, bearing in mind the proposed visit of Miss Melton, that Christina should, in the course of conversation this morning, mention that Mr. Capel had known that young lady for some years, though he had not recognised her under the *soubriquet* of "Mignonette." "He spoke of her—an acknowledged acquaintance—so carelessly, Cecile, that I fear your little castle about her being at Bickerton will have to be pulled down, and the bricks put by,—stacked up, in short, for the next occasion."

"That is just as it should be," said Madame d'Aulaincourt, with a smile: "neither she nor any other stranger will have it in their power to interfere at Bickerton soon;" and as Christina, who was sitting beside her, leant her head forward, to hide, perhaps, the blush which those words had called up, she resumed, in a lower tone—"Oh, I do hope it will be. He is so noble and so good, and you deserve even a better man. I do hope it will be."

Christina said nothing. Her cheek flushed still more, and a half-sensation of joy thrilled through her heart at hearing it thus mentioned,—for she hoped so too. She had had hopes and prospects of marriage before, and disappointments also. She had been on her guard, therefore, against thinking too much of Herbert; but she had begun long before this to like him, in spite of herself. Much as she tried not to be attracted by the man, she felt herself powerless before

all he did. He never made love to her. He was much with her, it is true—more than with any other girl in Lamford; but he never even flirted with her: his manner with her was that of a most intimate acquaintance. And still, with all this, he looked to her opinion first; he set a higher price upon her taste than that of any; he never checked the look of admiration which something she said or did, at times, called up. All the world said they were to be married,—she did not exactly know why; but the world said so. Yes; like Madame d'Aulaincourt, "she did hope so too."

Ah, me!—another hopeless dream!

Meanwhile, Herbert himself, what is he thinking of? The railway station being about five miles distant, and as he has plenty of time, he is driving that pair of chestnuts lately bought, rather quietly thither. The mail-phaeton and all the appointments are new. Gently do the animals, champing their bits, and revelling, like the rest of creation, in the glorious spring-tide of the year, trot along the well-kept road. Lightly runs the new carriage, and in it dreamily sits the owner.

She was coming. Had he any misgivings? No,—why should he? The affair had been broken off with her consent. She could not complain if he whom she surrendered when poor, was not hers when he rose to fortune.

At the same time the thought struck him—Ought he not—would it not be more delicate, if he left Lamford during her stay in it? She might not have heard of his succeeding to Bickerton. That would be

awkward. He should like to find out this. However that might be, he could not go now; for Dacre was coming to stay with him, which had been an arrangement of long standing. That settled the matter.

Besides, it would be cowardly on his part, such a step;—it would look like running away; and when he had done no wrong, too. No; she must take her chance.

Perhaps, after all, everything would pass off without disagreeableness. They would meet without outward embarrassment, whatever their inward feelings might be. And he would, after that, laugh at his own scruples. Stuff!

But had he no misgivings as to the course he had pursued two years ago? Did it never enter his head to go over again every step he had taken, and every reason which had actuated them? Did he think of canvassing once more the promises, word for word, that he had made a year before that, and of comparing them with the issue of events which he had hitherto treated as having absolved him from them, and as having made them of none effect. No, he did not. It might be that he had become habituated to the view he took of the whole subject, or that he could not bear to reopen what was once the happiest page in his life; or it might be *pride* which made him disdain to bring back thoughts that might otherwise have caused a pang.

Still, in spite of this, he once or twice looked at the vacant seat beside him, and the fancy just crossed him of a small trustful figure seated there, and a wistful face looking up in his, and saying in that manner

of hers which no pen can pourtray the two unmeaning words, "Yes! Herbert," to every opinion he offered.

But all these thoughts are banished now, lightly indeed as they may have crossed his mind. For he is at the station: the train has arrived,—has disclosed his friend,—and Dacre has grasped his hand.

"How are you, you man of acres?" is the good-humoured address of the new-comer.

"Well Dacre, old man, how goes it?" is the characteristic reply.

"Thriving," replied Dacre; "only it is so tremendously dusty. Quite hot for the time of year, upon my word. I say, you there—that is my portmanteau," to an officious porter, who was putting it into a fly with the other luggage of a bewildered lady, too bereft of thought while in the atmosphere of a railway to distinguish between other people's effects and her own.

"Well, Capel," said Dacre, when they were seated in the carriage, "and how many schools have you built, and how many churches have you endowed on your new estate, eh? Capital running trap this. I congratulate you."

The chestnuts soon brought them to Bickerton, and the traveller found the handsome luncheon spread for him,—no unwelcome meal. Then they explored the house—now, in his friend's company, almost as interesting an occupation to Herbert as it was when he first entered it, its owner.

"Upon my word you are a lucky fellow," said Dacre, when they were passing over it: "What particular

fascination of yours could it have been that turned the old sailor's brains?"

Dacre affected to look upon the whole thing as a capital joke, though in reality no man was better pleased than himself at the fortune which had visited his friend. In the same way he affected to deride certain vandalisms on the part of the late Admiral in the fittings and decorations of the house, and by certain sniffs and movements of impatience, to wonder at the absence of taste on that of Herbert, which would sanction the retention of such monstrosities; but in reality he was secretly gratified that the latter had had the good sense to put up with them, and had not, like a schoolboy with a new plaything, rushed headlong into mediæval and other excesses detrimental both to utility and to prudential economy. After this, there were the stables and farm-buildings to be visited; and here Dacre was at no pains to conceal his admiration, for Herbert's taste in the former was unimpeachable, and in the latter old Harbottle's experience had been brought into play. And so they spent the afternoon, and returned into the house about half an hour previous to dinner, having left all the more distant lions for the morrow.

They were in the drawing-room. Herbert had thrown himself into an arm-chair, when Dacre, who was standing near one of the windows, gazing at the park which stretched out into the distance before him, suddenly turned, and asked with some abruptness, "And pray when are these broad lands to claim their mistress? I suppose by this time the Carnation, and the Anemone, and the Lily know their fate?"

"What are you *au fait* at that nonsense?" said Herbert: "Who told you this Lamford tittle-tattle?"

"I know more about Lamford than you imagine. But that is not answering my question. Seriously speaking, Capel, are you not engaged to be married?"

"No, indeed I am not," was the ready answer: "you would have known it before this if I had been."

"Really!" returned Dacre, looking earnestly at Herbert, as if he thought there must be some mistake. "May I say what I mean?"

"Of course you may."

"Well, then, I fancied—and perhaps it was more than fancy—that you were engaged to some girl down in Somersetshire; and indeed, my gratification at this windfall was as much for her sake as yours."

"Oh! that matter has been off these two years," answered Herbert.

"What do you mean by 'being off?'"

"Broken off."

"By whom?"

"By the parents—by the young lady herself."

"Now just stop a moment," said Dacre, the cynical expression, which was the fault of his countenance, beginning to overspread it: "Take the former statement first. When did you ever hear, now-a-days, of parents being able to break off an engagement, when the young people stood firm, and had patience?"

"Why, there is such a thing as deference to parental wishes."

"For the present time: and that line must be followed, doubtless. But still, if the young people remain true, do not the parental wishes yield in the end?"

Herbert jumped up from his chair and began to pace the room restlessly.

"But what has that to do with the present case?"

"A good deal, I suspect. But let us come to the second part of your assertion. How much of the breaking-off did the young lady do in person?"

"All she could do, to be sure. Her parents bid her fulfil her part of it by returning me my presents and letters. She did so, in an envelope directed by herself, without a word of explanation—without a line."

"When you came into Bickerton, did you try whether the parental wishes had undergone no change?"

"Would you have had me?" said Herbert, indignantly: "Could I have consented to buy their daughter?"

"I don't say—I don't give an opinion; I suggest the question for yourself. You could only have purchased the possession of the lady, at all events: they could have had no more to part with in her than that. If she ever loved you really, her heart must have been your own property all along, and could not be affected by any sale of herself."

Herbert was thunderstruck. For two years he had been accustomed, or had accustomed himself, to think that he could have done no more than he had done under the circumstances which had separated Miss Melton and himself. And now at this late period—six months after the time when, if he had done her any wrong, he might have repaired his fault by placing his fortune at her feet—to have his conduct and his

motives called in question, was, to a sensitive, honourable mind like his, the cruellest pang.

At this moment the quarter-bell before dinner rang, to warn them whom it might concern that now was the time to make any alteration in their toilette which might seem requisite before the meal. Dacre at once obeyed the summons, and nonchalantly walked off to his room; Herbert followed his example mechanically, though in a perfect fever. When in his chamber, he threw himself into a chair, completely *abattu*. The doubt cast upon his conduct raised a hundred others, and with the thought upon him that he had wronged that trusting, loving little girl, all his old affection for her rushed at once back into his heart. Every fond look of those dear soft eyes—every word of her musical tones—the fairy form in that May moonlight—all came back as fresh as yesterday, as cherished, as beloved. Hastily rising, he opened a small case on the dressing-table, and therefrom, put away at the bottom beneath other letters, he drew what seemed to be a blank envelope. From within this he took one large lock of dark silken hair. How long ago was it since he had gazed upon that? As he looked on it now, the thought shot across him—how was it that, in the mutual restitution of the pledges each held from the other, she had not demanded that? Oh! fool that he was! the whole thing was clear. In everything else she had done she had acted under direction, perhaps under duress. This one act of forbearance, negative though it was, was the sole means she had of shewing that she was doing nothing of her own will; this was her mute protestation against her fa-

ther's commands—the silent avowal of her undying love. Dropping his hand on his side, he looked vacantly into the park: the view was vast, was rich, was his own. "All, Emmy, all," he said, between his teeth—"all I now see, I would gladly lay down to be as I was before, with only this;" and he turned his eyes once again to the long-forgotten lock.

The dinner-bell reminded him that Dacre was below, and that he had made no change in his dress. Hastily replacing the hair in its paper, he traced on the outside of it in pencil the word "Mignon"— no more— returned it to the box, and making a rapid toilette, he joined his guest below.

Dacre seemed quite to have forgotten the little episode in the drawing-room, and rattled on in his usual manner through dinner. But Herbert's equanimity had received a thorough overthrow, and he anxiously awaited the withdrawal of the servants, to come to a more definite explanation on the subject. Dacre saw his uneasiness, and was secretly grieved at what he had done. But he suspected that Herbert had got himself into a false position, and was not sorry on his side to have an opportunity of setting these suspicions at rest, as well as of opening a road, if road there was, to enable his friend to retrieve his folly.

The moment they were alone Herbert began:—

"Dacre, my dear fellow, I know you too well to believe that you would wilfully give me pain. Your remarks just before dinner have done so, for they imply nothing more nor less than that I have behaved dishonourably to a young lady to whom I was engaged."

"I really am very sorry," said Dacre; "I had no intention of imputing that. Let me explain."

"For pity's sake do," replied Herbert; "you have no idea how it has upset me."

"Well! but you must calm yourself: all that I said was mere conjecture, and I uttered it from a suspicion that, being sometimes a little hasty, you may have done something which will end in unhappiness to yourself."

Herbert was silent, and Dacre continued,—

"I know Ingilby; and hence my acquaintance with that nonsense of his about the Lamford bouquet; hence, also, my being in possession of the fact that Miss Melton of Bramsholme, to whom you were engaged some years ago, was an occasional visitor here. I was under the belief that that engagement was only suspended, not broken off. If the former, I had expected ere this to hear something of your approaching marriage; if the latter, why it has struck me that your meeting again may be productive of inconvenience, if not of trouble, to yourself. Hence my questions: your answers to them do not in the least lead me to impute unworthy conduct to you, but they suggest a complication—of all things the unluckiest in a case of this sort. If this girl were not likely to come—indeed, were not coming—here till after your marriage with some one else, there would be no difficulty in the matter. But you must remember your fortunes are changed. You were fond of each other once: some young women would think themselves entitled to an offer of a renewal of that engagement which only your poverty before *obliged* them to resign."

"But ask yourself, Dacre, would it not be repulsive

to every man of honourable feeling to have to buy that with money which his own qualities in days of poverty were not sufficient to obtain?"

"I grant you, yes, if you are certain that Miss Melton gave you up *willingly*, and not under the pressure of a power greater than her own. But let me proceed. You entertain a pardonable pride against such a course: you have not adopted it;—but you meet again: many causes—renascent love among them—draw you together. She will have *her* pride then: you did not come to her when she thinks you ought; she will have nothing to say to you now you do come. You are therefore in this false position; she thinks you have treated her ill in this point; you think that she has treated you ill in consenting to cast you off as she did. In fine, who is unhappy, she or you, or both?"

Herbert cast his face upon his hands and groaned. "I wish, Dacre," he said at length, "that you had come down in October, as at first intended."

That was it: upon such slight events does Divine Providence make the whole of our existence to hinge.

"But Capel," said Dacre, "I had no idea when I started this, that it would move you to this extent. Most of this is pure conjecture. Forget it, at all events for the present. We will talk of it again, and it will go hard if we don't knock up a plan to set all right. Come, take a glass of wine. This Admiral of yours had no bad notion of claret."

Herbert shook his head. "I would sit down unrepiningly against everything, except the thought that Emmy believed I had wronged her."

Dacre was not so sure of that.

Herbert was upset for the evening; and when he retired for the night, it was not to rest. After tossing for some time restlessly, he left his bed, threw open the window, and gazed into the night. The May moon was up in all her glory, just as on that night when last he saw her. His fevered imagination soon began to detect her voice in the slight breeze which fanned his burning brow. "See, Herbert," he heard her say, "the moon has risen over Holmwood bright and clear." Alas! there was no brightness in it for him. Then came back to his memory those cheering words, "All will come right; I know it will,—I feel it will," in the same soft tones of music which three years ago his heart had loved to drink in. "Oh! Emmy, my Emmy," he felt himself saying again, as then. But the breeze answered not now;—he listened in vain for the trustful "Yes," the longed-for balm to his wounded soul.

Far away in her quiet home at Bramsholme is she sleeping,—those soft eyes that once beamed alone for him, veiled in repose. Her struggle has been endured; she has borne, and she rests.

The morn comes, and fevered Herbert seeks his couch again: for what account? To dream, and start, and sleep again, and to arise weary and unrefreshed after all.

Poor Christina!

CHAPTER XVII.

EDWIN DACRE.

A soul as full of worth as void of pride,
Which nothing seeks to shew, or needs to hide;
A face untaught to feign; a judging eye
That darts severe upon a rising lie,
And strikes a blush through frontless flattery;—
All this he was .....—POPE.

THE Rev. Edwin Dacre was a contemporary of both Herbert and Henry Motcombe at college, though known only by report to the latter. In actual talent he was inferior to the former, as in the attributes which lead to worldly success he was immeasurably his superior. He had never, by hard study even, attained to the academical honours which Herbert had carried off without effort, and with little preparation, and yet every step he had made in life had been a step in advance. He lacked the brilliancy and finish of Herbert's mind; he had comparatively but little poetry in his own disposition, while his friend grasped nothing except through that medium. But instead, he was gifted with the rare power of looking at one thing at a time, and so, by steadiness of purpose, of seldom failing in the object he pursued. He would strip a sub-

ject to a practical nakedness which would offend a more refined mind, but he dealt with it more effectually, and not the less truthfully, in the end.

He looked on most subjects in a broad liberal light, and was not free from the charge of utilitarianism; his views tending more to the adaptation of religion to the wants of the times, than of the failings of mankind to the discipline of religion. As a clergyman, he was painstaking, conscientious, and charitable, and he deprecated extremes—being no friend to either Evangelical or Tractarian. But he hated to be called a Broad Churchman, because under that term he considered much to be comprehended to which he never could subscribe. And yet broad he certainly was. He was continually declaiming for what he called Catholicity in the Church, by which he did not mean Apostolic Catholicity, but something partaking of expansion to meet liberal views, and comprehension to take in every shade of religious nonconformity. At the present time he held no cure, having been about a year before incapacitated from duty by severe illness, and preferring now to assist brother-clergymen who needed it.

In countenance he was dark, with a certain hardness of feature, and with a cynical smile, which, until one knew him, was certainly disagreeable. His eyes, however, were large, soft, and full of kindly feeling, and people had only to look at them to counterbalance any unpleasant feeling raised by the general severity of the countenance and of that smile itself.

The regard that existed between him and Herbert Capel was strong and sincere. The latter was just

the sort of character which, though utterly dissimilar to his own, he most admired. In their differences of opinion, particularly on religious matters, he used to say he wished he could think like Herbert, even though he was satisfied with the correctness of his own view. "I wish I could look at it like you," he would say; "I really envy people who can enjoy and enter into that splendid service. But I am so cold, so matter-of-fact, that it has no effect upon me, but to make my mind wander." Party uncharitableness he could not find sufficient indignation for. He was indulgent to the other faults of both extremes, considering neither of them right, but both of them *necessary* to the welfare of the Church,—a way of thinking which Herbert used to satirize somewhat severely, "as Dacre's view of the unity of the faith in the bond of peace." The fact is, he was a charitable, kindly-hearted man, who tried to view religion by the light of the times, mixed with the light of inspiration.

No man had been more pleased with Herbert's advancement than himself. Herbert was just the man, he said, to be the pet of Fortune. In the common walk of life he would never have succeeded. It was not that he was an idler, or a spendthrift, or a profligate, but his qualities were such as only a small coterie, and not the world at large, ever recognises in the ordinary way; and yet higher qualities were never united in man. The only romance, or approach to it, in Dacre's own disposition, was a tendency to love Herbert for his faults: he looked at the latter as through that gentleman's medium, and not through

his own, and it was the only instance of his doing so ever recorded of him.

He was a great admirer of female excellence, and immensely fond of female society, though he never committed the error of falling in love. His type of perfection was exhibited in Christina Percy, whom he considered good enough for Herbert, and much more cut out for Bickerton than "that mournful, pale-faced little thing whom the latter nearly broke his heart about."

Dacre was not best pleased with himself for having raised that unfortunate storm in Herbert's breast which we noticed in the last chapter. "Silly of me!" he said to himself, as he was undressing: "if I had left it to itself, the pride of the two would have stood their best friends. He would have been piqued by her indifference; she would have disdained the man who forgot her in the day of his prosperity, and the two might soon have ceased to think much of each other." But by holding up the mirror to Herbert's heart, he had touched his sense of honour, and had made him miserable.

The next morning he tried to soothe the sore place as much as possible, and by degrees, as the day wore on, Herbert got more tranquil; but Dacre's lecturing had had the effect of bringing back all his former feelings towards Mignonette, (he recognised the aptness of the title she had received now,) and it was quite clear that he would get little rest until she came. Had Dacre been able to read the young lady's heart as well as he had that of her lover, it is probable that, for Herbert's peace, he would have counselled an im-

mediate journey to Bramsholme, to set the matter straight, and had that failed, would have carried the gentleman off from Lamford during the ensuing three months; but he was not, and who can say that matters would have turned out much better if he had been?

They were to dine at Mr. Harbottle's this first evening, and in describing their host's peculiarities, and giving Dacre an idea of the persons they were likely to meet, Herbert found some distraction. Dacre, too, was studiously anxious to work off the impression which his words had first produced last night. Had it not been for the sudden revival of his old attachment in all its force, this might have easily been effected; for Herbert was then strong in the rectitude of his own intentions and motives. But the dream of his early days was upon him, and a few hours of the solitude which he sometimes courted would not have been amiss for him now.

In the course of this day, Colonel Deane called and regaled the new-comer with the details of his grievance respecting the sale of Kemp: "Which," he proceeded to say, "now that such a sad bereavement had befallen Madame d'Aulaincourt, he had been looking upon as an easy matter; but he was grieved to say—he said it indeed with disappointment—that Mr. Percy, who managed what little business Madame d'Aulaincourt had of that kind for her, considered the object of his wishes further off than ever."

This conversation was not peculiarly interesting to either of the gentlemen. Herbert had been sick of it any time these six months, and as Dacre had not the remotest idea where either Kemp or Natchetts were,

or in what degree of proximity they stood to each other, the gallant Colonel might, as far as he was concerned, have been talking Arabic. Then ensued enquiries after Mrs. Deane and "Carnation," and this led to the object of the Colonel's visit, of which he had been hitherto somewhat oblivious, and which was to ask his friends to dinner some day in the succeeding week—a civility which, being in honour of Dacre, was duly acknowledged and accepted.

After the Colonel came Mr. Strong, who, having scented a parson in the neighbourhood, was anxious to bespeak his services for a sermon before the other curates got hold of him. By-and-bye Herbert and Dacre in their turn went down into the town, and the latter made acquaintance with Dr. Crompton and old Percy, and, what was still better, with his daughter, who, on her side, got wondering what could be the matter with the owner of Bickerton, who shewed himself during the visit very restless and absent. The latter thought the day very disagreeable and stupid, and looked forward with some hope to an arrangement which was to be set on foot for enabling Dacre to gratify his fishing propensities—a sport to which he was much given—when he, Herbert, would be left to wander about alone and dream of Emmy in peace.

At last it was time to dress for the dinner at Castle Bank, to which Herbert somehow looked forward as a distraction; for all the inmates there were very fond of him, and did their best to please and divert him. This hope was somewhat dashed by seeing that Colonel Deane was one of the company, who, though really a fine, noble-hearted country gentleman, had that one

foible of boring people with his grievances; and not much encouraged by hearing that Mrs. Neeld, of Bolder, was expected momentarily. But the balance was restored the other way by the apparition of old Crompton, who was as welcome everywhere as the sunshine in winter. It might be mentioned here that Mr. Strong was very rarely asked to Castle Bank, and that Motcombe and Trevanion, whom old Harbottle devoutly believed to be Jesuits in disguise, had never been inside his doors. On this occasion Dacre was the only clergyman present. The ladies of the party, besides the family, consisted of the Neelds, Miss Crompton, and Miss Dillwyn; while Walter and Lester Harbottle and old Dillwyn made up the cavaliers.

At dinner, Herbert found himself in what would have been a comfortable place, but for a drawback. He was next Mrs. Harbottle, who was an especial favourite of his; but on the other side next himself was Miss Crompton, whom he was in the habit of contemplating with as great an aversion as it was in his nature to regard any lady. Miss Crompton was not a lively acquisition to any society, but she was decidedly bad company at a dinner-party. In the first place, she ate nothing, so she demanded plenty of attention from her nearest neighbour in the way of conversation; and in the second place, she heard nothing, so that no remark of any one else had the smallest effect in stopping the thread of her conversation, which went on, always addressed to the same neighbour, in one monotonous, uninterrupted hum. Had she confined her powers on the present occasion

to her other neighbour, Mr. Dillwyn, it would have answered her purpose just as well, as that gentleman was as silent as the figure-head of a ship, whether spoken to or not; and it would have raised her very much in Herbert's esteem also. But she happened, unluckily, to be impressed with the idea that she and Mr. Capel "got on very well together," as she termed it; and so she bored him with much sweetness and pertinacity until the ladies retired. Poor Herbert, who was bent upon a charming little chat with Mrs. Harbottle, and had been out of sorts all day, did not spend the most agreeable of evenings.

Dacre had got with Miss Dillwyn near to the host, at the bottom of the table, where, as he ought to have been, he was cheerful and satisfied; of course to the indignation of the prettiest Miss Neeld, who found herself cavaliered by the *gallant* but taciturn Dillwyn. Mrs. Neeld was in the post of honour at Mr. Harbottle's right; and the Doctor faced Herbert.

Such a party was not a bad one, as times go; but Herbert thought it detestable. The Doctor kept occupying Mrs. Harbottle's attention with information about a poor family he was attending, and in whom she was supposed to be interested; while Miss Crompton entertained him with a long story about an old lady who had been upset in a coach some twenty years previously—a history on which, from time to time, she expected him to make remarks, though she never heard them herself, nor cared to hear more than that he made them.

It may be imagined, then, what a relief it was to him to see the ladies retire; though his sensations on

that score changed into despair at Papa Harbottle's mounting his hobby almost immediately, and commencing to favour Dacre with a list of the enormities of the Lamford clergy, as they appeared to his exuberant imagination. Having no fancy for being dragged into the discussion which was pretty sure to arise out of this topic, if it became general property, Herbert, with some pleasure, turned his attention to Dr. Crompton's description of the state in which he found the two ladies at Kemp that morning; which led, by degrees, to other rational conversation. But this was not to last long.

"How is this, Capel? You have been taking me in," cried Dacre, on a sudden, to him: "you told me that there were no extremes at Church here. Why, Mr. Harbottle tells me that your clergy are the *ne plus ultra*."

In the temper he was in, from other circumstances, Herbert felt disposed to be very angry at the wrong-headed ignorance of his host, but he controlled himself sufficiently to say coolly, "I measured the word *extremes* by the standard by which I knew you would measure it. Mr. Harbottle's views are extreme also, as I take them, but in the other way."

Colonel Deane thought proper to consider this as a tremendous joke, and indulged in some hilarity at Herbert's slyness in taking in his friend so, although it must be owned the gallant officer had not heard one word of the conversation which had given rise to the charge he made.

"I certainly dislike extremes," said Dacre, when this outburst of merriment had ceased; "but I think

we should be charitable with them, where they are exhibited on either side. For my own part, I like to know that they do exist: I think that they are counteracting pieces of machinery in a grand scheme of mechanism. And though, when exhibited in individual cases, they work mischief, as parts of a whole I should be sorry to see them cease to exist."

But this was far too stiff a piece of reasoning for old Harbottle, who dismissed it with—

"Aye, just so—to be sure: that is all very well, as far as it goes. But I can look at it only in this light—that there is a Vicar in our parish and three Curates, all systematically introducing Popery into our services. Indulgence for extremes is all very well, but I am a Protestant,—my father was a Protestant, and my grandfather before me; and I have no indulgence for such an extreme as that."

Dacre looked in surprise at Herbert, who merely smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Come, come," said Dr. Crompton, "you are misleading Mr. Dacre, unintentionally, Harbottle. Whatever you and I may think—and it is natural to us to fancy that the method which our fathers had in many things is the best—you should tell him that what the Lamford clergy do, they protest they do on the authority of the Reformation. They give you chapter and verse for everything, that I must say."

"That is just what I complain of," said Harbottle: "they rake up old authorities for their innovations —authorities which are nothing more nor less than popish."

"What are the innovations?" said Dacre, in a whisper, to Herbert.

"Re-pewing the church—daily service—weekly communion—sermons on the festivals," was the answer.

"And their authority?"

"For the new pews, decency; for the rest, the Prayer-book."

Dacre smiled, and then turning, said aloud—

"I am surprised to hear this: I thought that here you all got on so well together."

"So we do," said Dr. Crompton, interposing: "there never was a town so well situated in that respect. We all like the clergy: they are conscientious, diligent, good men, all of them. But they act up to the age, which is a reforming age; and our friend Harbottle, here, is an old Tory, and hates reform."

"I hate Popery," said Harbottle, dogmatically.

"What Dr. Crompton says, I have said all along," said Herbert: "the High Church party are but reformers, not revolutionists; just as the Evangelical party were, before them, reformers, but in a different way. All reform brings opposition of some sort; and if the reform here had been of an Evangelical tendency, Mr. Harbottle would have manifested indignation in an equal degree against that."

"Not I," said Harbottle: "they may do what they please, if they won't drag us to Rome."

"Do you know what has happened at Lapperswade, Mr. Harbottle?" said Herbert.

"Not I: They have a new vicar there, who is a Papist too, I dare say."

"All the world thought him a sound Churchman," said Herbert. "You know Colonel Harvey, at Lapperswade? he is no Papist, is he?"

"No, he is of the right sort," replied the host.

"And Sir George Caufield?"

"Well, I fancy he is a Dissenter."

"And Mr. Marston Sommering?"

"I should not think he had much religion of any kind," said Dr. Crompton, with a laugh, in which Colonel Deane joined.

"Well now, listen to what I heard yesterday," continued Herbert: "The new Vicar arrived at Lapperswade three months ago, and everything went on very nicely. He was very civil, and diligent, and painstaking, and made no changes at first: nor has he now; at least, *we* should not call them so here; but he has just done that which shews his opinions to be of the extreme Evangelical party: and every one of the three gentlemen whose names I have mentioned—the one 'who is of the right sort,' the other, 'who may be a Dissenter,' and the third, 'who has not much religion of any kind,' have decided to retire from the church, or, I should say, to cease attending divine service, *avowedly because of the Vicar's Low Church tendencies.*"

Dr. Crompton and Colonel Deane both broke into a fit of uncontrollable merriment at this announcement; and the former said, "You don't mean that?"

"It is so; I have it from most reliable authority," replied Herbert: "and I lay great stress upon it, because I think it affords a lesson from which every one of us, including Mr. Harbottle, if he will allow me

to say so, may learn something. What is it which offends these gentlemen at Lapperswade? It is no outrage of doctrine; for two out of them, at all events, must have leanings to the party their new Vicar represents. It is simply because he has done something which they did not expect, which takes them by surprise. They are in reality seceding from the church because of a phantom. Now the lesson to us is to try and avoid attributing to our consciences, as they are doing, what is really to be attributed to *spiritual pride*. They are angry with their new Vicar for precisely the same reason, only on the opposite extreme, that Mr. Harbottle is offended with our three curates."

Mr. Harbottle said that was not so. "His objections were no phantoms. The curates did what they did at Rome, that was all he knew."

"And so did you likewise, when you were married, and when you brought your children to baptism, Mr. Harbottle,—you did precisely what they do at Rome. But it is not the particular objection which I notice, and which at times may have a show of reason on its side, but the *animus* of those who object to a thing because it seems new, without waiting to understand what it is for; in short, because it is nothing less than 'reform.'"

"There certainly cannot be any doubt about the necessity of the reforms you mention," said Dacre, "if the reformers would keep Catholicity more in view in what they do."

"Eh! what?" cried old Harbottle; "Catholici—?"

"Nay," said Herbert, with a laugh, "don't be

alarmed, Mr. Harbottle; Dacre neither means what you mean nor what I mean by his word 'Catholic.' If the early Christians had given that word your interpretation, Dacre, St. Athanasius might have rested in peace, and the opinions of Arius would have been as much tolerated in the Church as are those of Mr. Gorham."

"Never mind Arius," said Colonel Deane: "All I can say is, I think we are very well off here, myself. I liked Mr. Motcombe's sermon last Sunday particularly."

"And so did I," said Dr. Crompton: "it seemed so fresh to me to hear it impressed upon us that we ought to look more to the humanity of the Saviour, —that Christ died for us as man, rose again as man; in short, saved us as *man*. I think that if the poor heard that oftener, they would feel much more consolation in reading the Gospel and hearing it read."

"Depend upon it, it was all jesuitry," said Harbottle: "that is the way these fellows do. As if our fathers, and their fathers before them, did not know how to write sermons before Mr. Motcombe."

"I am sure they ought to have done so," said Herbert, laughing; "for they have left us plenty to read."

And coffee being announced, the gentlemen moved to the drawing-room.

Meanwhile the ladies, eschewing all religious topics, were engaged on the mundane subject of Mr. Capel's health, of which Miss Crompton assured all the fair ones assembled, many times oftener than was necessary, that she did not like the look; and Mrs. Har-

bottle twitting Miss Dillwyn with being in all Miss Percy's secrets, asked her when *it* was to come off? Bella, looking very smiling and pretty, disclaimed the compliment, and assured Mrs. Harbottle that it was a subject on which she had never heard Christina drop a word.

"Well, my dear, I hope it will be soon; for I really think the gentleman, to judge from his manner to-night, is in a very bad way."

"He did not seem to like anything that was offered to him," said Miss Crompton, who evidently measured the strength of Herbert's passion by his appetite.

"Pray is Bickerton his own, or only a life estate?" asked Mrs. Neeld, anxiously.

"Oh! his own absolutely," replied Mrs. Harbottle.

"And pray who is the young lady who is thought —that is, who it is supposed—I should say, whom you alluded to just now as having———?" asked Mrs. Neeld, affecting to be ignorant of what the whole neighbourhood had been canvassing for the last month.

"Well, I hardly know whether I have any right to speak of it as more than a very prevalent idea. I ought only to remark that Mr. Capel has paid Miss Percy a good deal of attention lately."

"Miss Percy! you surprise me," said Mrs. Neeld, elevating her eyebrows: "Blanche, dear, was not that the young lady you pointed out to me in black and scarlet at the ball?"

"Yes, Mamma: you know Miss Percy as well as I do," answered the lovely Blanche, not very dutifully.

"You mistake, my dear; I cannot know her, or I

should not have asked you," replied the matron, with dignified sweetness. Then turning to Mrs. Harbottle, "I must be very stupid, but I really had almost paid Miss Percy the bad compliment of thinking her an old maid."

Bella Dillwyn flushed crimson, but said nothing.

Mrs. Harbottle laughed good-humouredly, and said, "I don't think Christina would have minded that. She, indeed, delights in her name of Wallflower: but for all that, she has, in the opinion of us all here, captivated Mr. Capel; and as he has the character of being a very discriminating, sagacious young man, it speaks no harm for her."

"When do you think it will come off?"

"Oh! pray don't ask me. I know nothing about it—not even that they are engaged."

"He looks very ill," said Miss Crompton, for the twentieth time.

"He sat next Miss Crompton at dinner, did he not?" asked Miss Neeld of Bella Dillwyn.

"Yes. And did not you notice how she talked to him, poor fellow? I'll lay anything he is as lively as can be in the dining-room with the gentlemen now. Let us just watch him when he comes in."

They both of them did so, and to such good purpose, that Herbert, surprised to see himself the object of such curiosity at the hands of two very pretty young women, laughingly asked them "if they were quizzing him?" upon which ensued a very good-humoured chat between the three.

"I don't believe he is in love a bit!" said Miss Blanche, by-and-bye, to Miss Bella.

"Depend upon it, it was all that tiresome Miss Crompton," replied Miss Bella to Miss Blanche: "Let us ask Dr. Crompton; he is sure to know."

The Doctor was coming that way, as it happened, thoughtfully and peripatetically stirring his coffee in his course, and so they had a good opportunity.

"Dr. Crompton," said Bella, "do not you think that Mr. Capel is looking ill?"

"Yes, I do: I thought he was looking ill this afternoon. What then?"

This was rather an odd reply for a doctor: the ladies expressed their astonishment.

"What then!" repeated Bella: "why, to be sure, you ought to cure him."

"Bless your heart, my dear young lady! young men do not require doctors; they get well of themselves—at least, they ought to; and if they do not, the best remedy for such complaints as Mr. Capel seems to be suffering from consists in such bright eyes as those I see before me."

"Do not be so silly, Dr. Crompton," said Bella, who was a great favourite of his; "but tell us, like a good man, what you think is the matter with him."

"It is an astonishing thing," said the Doctor, reflectively, and gazing on the young lady's countenance the while, "what interest all my children take in excellence and worth. You know that Bella is my child, Miss Neeld, do you not?" turning to the latter.

"Your child, Dr. Crompton! what do you mean?" exclaimed the astonished Snowdrop.

"I mean what I say," returned the Doctor: "she is my child—one of my many children—of my large

family, of which I am so justly proud: I brought her into the world."

Bella good-humouredly put her hand on the Doctor's mouth, saying, "Hush!"—while Miss Neeld looked rather silly; and, as they say of the debates in the House of Lords, "the subject then dropped."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THREE YEARS AGO.

The joys of love, if they should ever last
Without affliction or disquietnesse,
That worldly chaunces doe amongst them cast,
Would be on earth too great a blessednesse,
Liker to heaven than mortal wretchedness.—SPENSER.

As the time is now drawing near when we shall have to introduce Miss Melton in person to our readers, a few words will be necessary to explain the circumstances of that early acquaintance with Herbert Capel which threatens now so seriously to affect his peace of mind.

Any detail of the early life of our hero is both unnecessary and beyond our limits; and those who may be apt to think this part of our story unaccountable or unsatisfactory, may take our assurance for the fact, that any further information on these points than what we are now about to give, would be but tedious, and inappropriate to the subject. Herbert's character may be an uncommon one, but his life, for all that, up to the time of his coming to Bickerton Firs, was the natural result of his foibles, and what any one who knew them might have predicted with tolerable correctness from the first.

The first evidence of this was displayed upon his taking his degree, when, instead of choosing a profession, or, at all events, an occupation with a profession in view, which most men would have done, he preferred a life of uncertainty, because it was independent; in other words, because he was not bound to it, and might throw it up when he liked. This was at that time his ruling fault. He was not naturally idle, but he was ordinarily so quick, and had been so well grounded in those accomplishments which had hitherto demanded the exercise of his powers, that he had no need of application. A belief that he could do what he pleased, an impatience of control, and a general love of liberty, produced a distaste to anything which implied working by rule.

And so he spent the first two years of his life after taking his degree, as a private tutor in the University during term, and in taking long vacation parties during the summer months. To the uninitiated, be it told, that this is an easy, lucrative life, if the tutor can get pupils; and Herbert had no lack of them. His name stood well,—he had taken the highest honours,—and he was an agreeable, popular man. There would have been no harm in this, had he had the Church or any other profession in view, but that was not so; he followed the line because it pleased him, and because he was restless, and would settle to nothing better. The course was a foolish one; his general unsteadiness, and his unwillingness to conciliate his superiors, had already lost him the fellowship which he must otherwise have had. But he cared not. Generous, liberal, open-hearted, he looked to the present only,

and the circumstance had no effect on him. Of course the fruits of all this did not delay to appear, and in due time he bitterly regretted his conduct. When we first saw him at Bickerton, he had tasted of these, and disappointment had not only tried, but properly tempered him. Anxious for change, he threw up this life, and took to travelling; it was thus he met Admiral Ayscough: but on returning to England after a year's absence, he found his small private fortune, which he had staked on a foolish speculation, swallowed up, and the fact somewhat rudely forced upon him that he must now settle himself systematically to work to support himself. His sisters, then lately married in India, consented with their husbands to help him, if he would go to the bar, or into orders, until he was able to make head himself; but Herbert was far too proud to hear of that, and bethinking of his old plan, advertised for pupils, and this time became a travelling tutor, which did very well for a period. But there were disagreeables annexed to this: he did not always get pupils that he liked, and he was not, moreover, quite understood himself on some occasions. Once the profligacy of a pupil over whom he had comparatively no control, was attributed to his mismanagement, and at last he had to pass a year without any one at all, when, but for his pen, he must have starved. Matters just then looked badly for him. All his early boyish carelessness of manner began to be talked of as obstinate idleness; all his impatience of control as badness of heart, and the unsettled nature of his habits as profligacy. Then came regrets, self-accusation, remorse; but he was proud as ever, and would

receive no assistance which could only be got gratuitously. His circumstances had one salutary effect, however, and that was that he became impressed by them with the necessity of regular employment, which he set to work might and main to attain.

It was at this time that the governors of the large Grammar-school of T——, in Somersetshire, advertised for a head master. He was to be a member of one of the Universities, a graduate in honours, &c. Herbert knew one of these governors, and sent in his application. He very nearly got the place: but the report of his general unsteadiness of character followed him here, too, and, though with much unwillingness, another was preferred. This was a severe blow, and on its falling he hardly had the courage to look round for what to do next.

At this juncture the one governor whom he knew offered his advice. The Earl of Syne and Seal, who lived in the neighbourhood, wanted good occasional tuition for his two sons. The Earl paid well, and was worth having as a patron. The neighbourhood, too, was a good one. What the Earl did, the others could do. Fair remunerative occupation was certainly to be had, and it would be well for him to take it, until he could turn round and see what next was to be done. Herbert thought so too, and for this purpose, and on the same recommendation, took up his present abode at Bramsholme, as being the most convenient, from its contiguity to Lord Syne and Seal's estate, where he was first engaged.

Bramsholme is a mere village, a sub-post town, with but two shops, and with no society proper to itself

to speak of. Its society consists really of the landed gentry round about, who have little or no connection with the place other than through the Church. The Doctor even does not live nearer than the neighbouring post-town. To a man, therefore, of Herbert's habits, Bramsholme was likely to be, not the village where the "blue-bells," but where the blue-devils, grew. And so it might have been, but for the one only family who could be considered the especial property of Bramsholme proper, and that was the parson's family.

The Rev. George Melton, the perpetual curate of Bramsholme-with-Bart, was a warm-hearted, laborious clergyman, such as may be seen working in obscurity in any of the large underpaid agricultural towns of our country. He, too, had been a scholar; he, too, had had to work against disappointment and difficulty; and though he had not, like Herbert, brought the realization of that fact upon himself, he had found that success at college does not necessarily mean success in after life. Here he was at fifty an underpaid curate with a large family,—contented, in truth, but not too well off.

An acquaintance with Herbert almost immediately followed upon the latter's arrival. The two, being excellent scholars, had so much in common, that the acquaintance soon ripened into an intimacy. Mr. Melton thought Herbert fit for anything, and got him more pupils; in return, Herbert insisted on teaching his three eldest boys gratuitously, thereby seriously lightening the clergyman's labours, to the benefit of his parish. To be brief, Herbert soon found in Brams-

holme parsonage—though he lived in a cottage hard by—what was equivalent to a home.

Mr. Melton rejoiced in eight children, of whom Emma, the eldest, had, just before his arrival, attained the age of eighteen. Of her personal appearance we shall have to speak by-and-bye. She was very little, and in shape like a fairy; and in this respect alone was sure to attract attention. She had been well educated, and finished in a London school,—for her father was proud in this respect,—and therefore did not lack accomplishment. But perhaps her most striking excellence was a certain intelligence of manner, which the more pleased, because, from her diminutiveness of appearance, a mere stranger might be apt to pass her by. In this respect, joined to a considerable activity in all she set her mind to, she was the light of her father's house, as well as of the village itself. She was indefatigable at the schools, and with the sick and poor, and always in a way which seemed to shew it was a matter of course; and her presence now at home was also a source of considerable relief to her mother, who enjoyed anything but good health, and whose place she filled in every available manner.

And yet my readers must not be led to think that there was anything bustling about her. Intelligence she carried in everything she did; but there was just enough deliberation about it to prevent that verging into what would be unnatural and exaggerated. She was simplicity itself, but it was a simplicity of mind rather than of manner,—a simplicity which had been more brought out than supplied by education.

There was not much in this, however—giving it its highest meed of approval—for Herbert to fall in love with. Granted that she was what, two years later, Sir Everard Ingilby declared her to be, — a most fascinating little person, one would not have supposed her exactly the woman to have captivated a man of his temper and composition. But that has nothing to do with it. Miss Edgeworth long ago demonstrated the great truth, that two-thirds of the attachments of young people result from attraction; [in other words, from their being accidentally thrown much together; and hence, with much less power of fascination than Emmy really possessed, the same result might have followed here. Six months had elapsed, and Herbert was really one of the family. From the old lady to the little one who could talk imperfectly, he was consulted in every matter by all, He discussed music with Emmy, classics with Mr. Melton, cricket with the boys, and dolls with the younger children, as if he, too, had been in the family. He accompanied them in their evening strolls during the summer, and read to them in the winter, as if he had been a Melton instead of a Capel. Well, six months had elapsed, and the idea began to creep upon him that he was getting fond of Emmy. He scouted the notion at first as a weakness,—perhaps astonished that anything so serious should result from their very brotherly and sisterly intercourse. But by degrees it began to make him uneasy. He was not quite sure that such a proceeding upon his part, as thinking of her in this way, was quite right; and he could hardly believe, too, that it really could be a serious feeling.

Perfect as she was, she was so different to every ideal of perfection in a woman which his imagination, at various times of his life, had set up. Altogether, the subject began to fidget him. Still he could not help thinking about it. He had all his life been a dreamer. There was something so curious in this, that he could not help following it out in his fancy to a possible result;—there could be no harm in that. Ah! well, one pretty well knows what comes of carrying out dreams of this sort. From building in the air, people come to trying their hand at more actual architecture, which, when it breaks down, causes more lasting damage than the aerial bricks and mortar which every day brings tumbling about our ears!

But Herbert's love did not want dreaming to develope it; circumstances stepped in to help that. He had been eight months in Bramsholme, when his friend the grammar-school governor before mentioned, who was interested in him, and who did not think his permanent residence in that locality likely to end in making his fortune—indeed, he had only recommended it as a temporary measure—wrote to inform him of a vacancy for a second master in a large school in the North, which his acquirements and testimonials would justify him in every hope of attaining. This, of course, had the effect of laying open to him the real state of his heart. By all means he must apply for this place. The last two years of his life had much improved him; they had given him perseverance, steadiness, and a little forethought. He would now consent to work readily and steadily—to grapple, in short, with adverse fortune. He must go, that was certain: but

Emmy? The thought of her only shewed him how necessary it was for him to be up and stirring. How could he ever hope to deserve her until he had made him a home to offer her? He must apply for the place. The fact was broken to the Meltons, and was duly applauded as a necessary and proper step, and duly lamented, for the loss it entailed. Emmy, whom Herbert watched anxiously on the announcement, after the first look of surprise, bent her head in silence over her work, but except, he thought, a slight momentary tinge of colour in her cheek, displayed no sign of emotion. The next day, when they met near the schools, she remarked, in her frank, artless manner, that the place would be detestable when he had gone, but she certainly did not shew that she was in love, or, at all events, that she was aware of being so. But of course it all came round. Herbert, who had been fretting on the subject for a day or two, had cast himself into a chair in the drawing-room at the parsonage one afternoon, and she was standing near him, asking him some question about the probable day of his departure, when he could not help throwing his arms round her, and saying, in a low, trembling, despairing tone, "Oh! Emmy, I do so love you!" In the relative positions which he sitting, and she standing, thus occupied, his own head being bent down on her shoulder, her cheek touched his neck below the ear,—he felt the blood mantle in it, and he heard her catch her breath convulsively, but she did not move for some moments; and he wanted no better response.

He was elected to the vacant mastership; but five

weeks intervened before it was necessary for him to leave Bramsholme,—five weeks of happiness, which, though, perhaps, they seemed then to be wanting in yet a something to be complete, Herbert had good cause to remember to his dying day. Oh! what sorrow would he not have undergone—what labour have offered to endure, a few years later, but to bring back those five weeks. Ah! no, Herbert, man, they come but once in life; they are the one green spot in our existence—the sole oasis in a desert of dusty, choking years. During that five weeks they were thrown together continually by themselves, so that no clandestine meetings were necessary, or even thought of. But certain arrangements as to the future had to be discussed between them; and they were discussed then. Herbert did not wish Mr. and Mrs. Melton to know what had passed, for the present. He dreaded so lest they would set their faces against anything of the kind, that Emmy, sorely against her own sense of right, was obliged to consent to secrecy; but she would only do so on the condition that she should neither be asked to write to, nor to receive letters from him, till they knew all. When he chose to come and claim her, he would find her free. In answer to his fears lest she should change her mind, she artlessly replied that there was no *should* in the case—she *could* not change. She did all she could to make him understand that he must not think of their engagement as more than this,—that if he ever came to claim her, there she should be. Poor child! it was her only way to blind herself to the wrong of keeping the matter secret. And yet who can blame her?

She willingly entailed on herself all the anxiety which a parting for years—it might be without a chance of communication—would bring, sooner than distress her lover: and if she did wrong to her parents, she gained no pleasure or advantage to herself from it. And she little knew what anxiety she had entailed upon herself till he was gone. Excepting a few notes she had received from him while in Bramsholme, before she told him he must not write again, she never had a line from him; and as months crept on without a word of him, she began to realize what an absence such a one can be.

Herbert, meanwhile, was at his situation, which he occupied successfully enough for one year, when a post brought him a letter from Mr. Melton, which at once filled him with alarm and amazement. The writer stated his discovery of a clandestine engagement between his daughter and Mr. Capel. Of the former's conduct he should not speak in the present letter; but of Mr. Capel's duplicity and meanness, considering the position which he was allowed to fill in his family, he could not find words strong enough to express his opinion,—although, by-the-way, he tried the dictionary pretty severely while he was about it. Whether he would ever have consented to such an alliance, under any circumstances, he thought more than doubtful; under those, however, which Mr. Capel's conduct at present disclosed, nothing should induce him to do so. He begged that the acquaintance between them should be at once closed, &c., &c. Further on, he was happy to say that his daughter had enough sense of delicacy left her to see now this

matter in the light in which he did; that she joined with him in everything he said; and that she begged, of her own free will, to return him every evidence of the intimacy which had existed between them; while she called on him to return her presents—a list of which he, Mr. Melton, enclosed. The letter was accompanied by a packet directed to him, in Emmy's own handwriting, and enclosing the few little presents which he had made her, as well as the two little notes before-mentioned, but without a line or anything else to intimate whether the sender was acting under her own convictions or otherwise.

It will be seen by-and-bye that the Rev. George Melton had thought it not beneath him to indulge in a few fibs in the composition of which a summary has just been given. In a clergyman, such conduct was not only reprehensible, but also incomprehensible. We do not know how it is, but most certainly, in all matters in which the tender passion bears a part, even among parties collateral to it as well as among the lovers themselves, a subterfuge, a quibble, and, indeed, something worse, has got accustomed to be looked upon as quite a venial proceeding. Are the lovers the authors—everything is fair in love; are the parents—the answer is, "It was for the girl's or the boy's (as the case may be) own good: or the disingenuousness is defended on the ground of similar conduct on the part of those it is meant to overreach. No doubt there are those who are above all this; but there are very many, as those who have studied the world will aver — very many good, upright, even religious people, who have been hurried into this fault when under the influence

of the various passions which these untoward matters call up. Be warned against it, young and old! In love, as in other difficulties, "Honesty is the best policy," and, even though at the sacrifice of present comfort, it will be most likely to make the issue a happy one eventually. Both Herbert and Emmy realized this truth before long.

Whatever Herbert's sensations were on first perusing this letter, it was not till the second step that he began to regard it with feelings of alarm as to the real end that was to ensue. He wrote to Mr. Melton, of course, at once, and a very temperate, manly letter it was. He explained everything that had passed between them, laying whatever blame there was on himself, and explaining how greatly averse Emmy had been to secrecy all along; and offering to consent to any trial or any condition, if he might still be allowed to hope that she would be his wife whenever he was able to offer her a home. He suggested that there should be no engagement even, so that the young lady would be always free to marry any one else, if she felt so disposed. All he asked was permission for himself to hope, in the event of brighter days. This letter was returned unopened.

It was rather a hard stroke for a man who had patiently endured absence for one year. But at first he did not shew signs of doubting: he still did his best to believe that Emmy might be yet true. Why she should not have shewn some sign, even of the smallest kind, he could not imagine. A forget-me-not in an envelope — a trivial, every-day message through one of the friends who left Bramsholme for

the north about this time, and who mentioned that they should call on him. No: silence unbroken!—without a sign or the smallest token to cheer him! Absence *will* have its effect in this life, even on the most constant heart; and where it is aggravated by adverse circumstances, its action must acquire greater power. By degrees, after running over every separate circumstance for weeks and months, and taking into consideration her father's office and character, and that he would hardly descend to a lie in such a case, suspicion gradually grew to fear, and fear to conviction, that Emmy had thought better of the whole thing, and had forgotten him.

Thus passed the second year; when the head-master of the school to which he was attached resigning, a vacancy in that post suggested an improvement in his position. He applied for it, and ought to have had it, but stronger interest than his own assigned it to another. Disgust at this, coupled with anger almost at his treatment at *her* hands, who had been the pole-star of his fortunes, he resigned his own mastership, and threw himself once more on the world. Luckily, economy during the two previous years did not render other employment immediately necessary. In search of variety, he again sought the Continent, and before he returned Admiral Ayscough's sudden death and eccentric will placed him in the position in which we found him in the second chapter of this history.

Before we recount Emmy's part in this business, to bring her down to the point we have reached, let us not neglect a passing caution against the folly of

arguing in the dark on matters on which our happiness often depends. Herbert committed the fault of arguing by induction from facts which he could only take for granted. He assumed that Emmy had *told* her engagement to her father. That alone proved in his mind either that she regretted the engagement, or at all events, was doubtful about it. The *fact* really was that it all came out by accident. Again, he assumed her assent to all her father did to be proved by the absence of any sign or token shewing the reverse. The *fact* was that her father had extorted a promise from her that she would hold no communication with Herbert, direct or indirect. And so it is in all cases where we have to judge of others. We assume everything as a fact which the argument we found on it shews to be not improbable. We begin at the wrong end. The absent party is guilty—not because he has done so and so; but he has done so and so because he is guilty. Oh! never doubt the absent loved one, though proofs—if you like to call them so—be ever so strong against him or her!

The first year of Herbert's absence was passed by Emmy as bravely as might be. If she got low, she thought on his love; if she missed him, she recalled all his warm expressions of attachment. He wrote at first to her father, and at times to her mother. But the first was invariably too busy to answer, and the last was a bad correspondent. They were always glad to hear from him, but they made no bargain to reply; till at last he had nothing to write about, and no great excuse for writing, either. To court distraction, she worked as hard as ever in her father's parish,

and this next winter taxed all her strength, for it was a severe one, and the poor suffered proportionately. Perhaps as a result of the scarcity which marked it, was the presence of a certain fever which fell upon the district during the spring, causing a grievous mortality among the needy. When it was nearly gone, and the country was beginning to rejoice in the return of the warm sun and flowers, Emmy fell ill of it herself. It was not remarkable; she was not in very strong health, and had been in the cottages of the sick constantly for weeks past. She fell sick, then, and in the delirium which was a part of the malady, out came all the history of her love for Herbert, besides a great deal more, which had no foundation except in her disordered brain. Mamma took fright: how much of what she heard was true, and how much nonsense, she knew not. Mr. Melton was consulted; and when Emmy was convalescent—before, perhaps, she was strong enough for the subject—an explanation was demanded. Weak, depressed in spirits, and perchance a little light-headed still, her answers were neither coherent nor satisfactory. Her father demanded all evidence of what had passed, which of course she supplied; and sealing up the little presents and notes to which we have already alluded, he placed a pen in her hand, and bid her direct the packet. That was all Emmy heard of the matter for the present. Later, she was informed that Herbert had been written to, and that the affair was at an end. And it was then that the promise not to communicate with her lover, which we have also mentioned, was extorted. Some few of her presents, to

which Mr. Melton had appealed to Herbert, in his only letter, as a man of honour, to restore, *as his daughter wished it*, were given back to her. She hastened with them to her room, and eagerly running over them one by one, wept with delight to find that her lock of hair was not among them. "Dear Herbert!" she said to herself, "he is as true as ever."

It is not our intention to defend or palliate Mr. Melton's conduct in this transaction: it brought its true reward in due time. But some of the reasons which actuated him must be mentioned. No doubt he was annoyed in some measure by the clandestine nature of the affair, as he supposed it to have existed. His daughter gave him very little information on the point, and Herbert's explanation was returned unread. He considered it wicked on her part; mean and ungrateful on his. But there was a still further reason for grief and annoyance. A gentleman of some means in the neighbourhood had spoken to him about Emmy's hand, and although the latter was as innocent as a baby of any such occurrence, her father had nevertheless entertained and considered it. The days have gone by when fathers forced upon their children rich and distasteful suitors, to the exclusion and banishment of the younger and poorer lovers. But even now a father looks, and not unnaturally, to the worldly advantages, to accrue to a child from a matrimonial union. And who shall blame Mr. Melton for doing so, when we bear in mind his small life income, his weak health, and large family? The discovery of the engagement with Herbert was therefore a sore disap-

pointment just now, and this circumstance doubtless made him judge it more harshly than he would have done. Another cause of his bitterness was, that a few months before, one of those disinterested slanderers with which the world abounds, had been in the neighbourhood repeating the tale of Herbert's early follies, just coloured so far as to make them appear what they were not. Mr. Melton thought he had been taken in, and bitterly bewailed the day he had received him into his house. Blame him not, we say again. Our part here is to record, not to blame. Puny creatures as we are all, weak in judgment, swayed by the wind of prejudice, do we not err equally ourselves in some way every day of our lives?

Emmy passed through the summer, low, ailing, and dispirited. Oh! if he had but known,—tossed as he was on the tempest of his doubts,—would not some token, some sign, some bye-wind of his love and sympathy, have reached her? She could not have helped receiving it, though she could not have replied. Two sources of hope she certainly had: one was his not returning her hair; the other was one promise he had made, when they were canvassing the possibility of a sad issue to their love. He had then said, "Emmy, if even you were to repulse me yourself, and everything were to be finished between us for years, yet, if at the end of that the longed-for prosperity come, I will hasten to you, *even in that case*, and ask you to be mine."

Had Herbert forgotten this? Probably he had. *Pride* had blinded his judgment, and till Dacre came, he always dismissed the subject, if it intruded itself

on his mind. He had stifled recollection indeed. In truth, the issue served him right.

But Emmy remained out of health and dispirited, and the Doctor said she must have change of air. Now in the finishing school whither Emmy had been sent, and where she was among—we cannot say formed one of—the big girls, was a younger, though not for her age a little girl; a younger girl by some four years, between whom and her there sprang up a considerable intimacy. Miss Cecile d'Aulaincourt, for that was the young lady's name, took a great fancy to Miss Emmy Melton; and on her own removal from school, which took place very early, was always scheming to get her down to Kemp. On this occasion success crowned her efforts; and Emmy, being recommended change of air, passed the ensuing winter at Bishops Lamford, as the reader already knows.

Back again at Bramsholme, things went better. With returning strength came hope. The summer brought its sunshine and its birds. Emmy was in renewed health and beauty,—when, oh! look at the dash of blood in her cheek. A letter from Cecile, who is a constant correspondent, tells her the odd story of Admiral Ayscough's will, and of the curiosity of Bishops Lamford respecting the new-comer, one Mr. Herbert Capel.

Ah! me, for the sad mixture of sweet and bitter which pervades this life. The news, so glorious, so hopeful, passed slowly by without result. Herbert came not: September, October, November passed, and winter, less dull and cheerless than the cold feeling around the forgotten girl's heart, was at hand. Then appeared

the fruits of Mr. Melton's paternal disingenuousness: they came to him as bitter as to his child. Of course he wished it might come right now. Doubts began to haunt him as to whether Herbert had acted so ill now. Was Herbert's character so bad, after all? He made enquiries, and found that all he had been told was slander. The tongues which were glib enough against the penniless Mr. Capel, disclaimed with air of offended virtue the idea of imputations against the owner of Bickerton Firs. Mr. Melton saw that the brightest prospect that ever shone upon his house was not for him, and, what was worse, that the heavy print of a hopeless love was on his darling daughter's brow.

It was over. The spring was there again; and Emmy, with a bold, hearty resolution, had shut the old thought out. He had forgotten her: he was unworthy of such love as hers. She never would have believed ill of him; she had never doubted him. He was false alike to her and to himself. Be it so; it was over. She never could forget; but she would bear: and *pride*, too, with its seductive, ever-blinding influence, came here as well. He had struck her in her most sensitive point. The love of his days of poverty was no love for him in his days of wealth. Had he earned enough for subsistence, she would have done for him. But he had risen to opulence, to rank, sudden and unexpected. The daughter of the poor Somersetshire curate was no match for him now. So said pride.

Mrs. Melton, however, saw these matters with a graver uneasiness than her husband even, and with a

feeling akin to remorse,—for she felt that she had been the prime cause of severing Herbert from her daughter's heart. It was she who had caught the delirious wanderings at the sick child's bed-side, had put them into shape, and had conveyed them thus to her husband to deal with: and now, as she looked on Emmy's sufferings with all the acute instinct of a mother's interest, she seemed to discern the day when Emmy would fret herself into her grave. But she was spared that grief; God called her first. She had long been suffering from a complaint, the end of which, though slow, was not less sure. And one thing is certain—that the sorrow for her young one's disappointed hopes she carried with her to that end.

Time passed, and Frederica's early death brought the invitation to Emmy of which we have already heard. Should she go? Of course she ought. When she was ailing, Cecile and her mother were glad to receive and tend her. Cecile sadly wanted comfort now,—ought she not to go?

The mother heard her reasoning in this way, but was against the scheme. It was indelicate and wrong, she thought, under the circumstances, though she said nothing at first. It would look as if Emmy had gone to seek her old lover; and *pride* stepped in here, too. Besides that, if Mr. Capel took no more than passing notice of her, there would be more mortification, more disappointment. These points she put before her husband in asking his advice; but, if Mr. Melton had any clear idea upon the subject, he allowed it to be blinded by his hopes. Spare him

again; he was getting on in years, and there was before him his eight young children and the world. His view was, that Herbert had forgotten all about the past, and no doubt would take it for granted that Emmy had done so too. Vain hope!—Does any one ever forget such a past? They would, therefore, meet, if not as new acquaintances, at all events, as acquaintances who had not met for years. Neither he nor Mrs. Melton had any reason to look further. What would be, would be. At all events, he thought the decision might be left to Emmy's judgment; and to Emmy's judgment it was left.

Emmy decided that she would go, and for these reasons, simply laid down before her mother:—

"Cecile is unhappy, Mamma, and I ought to go, unless I am uncertain of myself. If there remained anything between me and Mr. Capel, it would be different,—as, for instance, if he had but just arrived at Lamford;—in that case, it would have been wrong and indelicate in me to go, because I was willing to have married him at that time, if he had come and asked me; but now he has set that at rest. By leaving eight months to pass over his head, he has ended everything between us; therefore I ought to go, unless I am not certain of myself."

"True, Emmy! but are you certain of yourself?"

"Ah, Mamma!" said her daughter, sadly shaking her head, "Does not my being so willing to go shew that my mind is made up? You do not know me, if you doubt that. Had Herbert insulted me ever so cruelly, he could never have hurt me more than he has. I would not have him now, not—not if he was

poor and destitute again: and that is saying a great deal."

There was a moment's silence, during which the mother looked anxiously in her child's face. Emmy continued:—"Another reason why I think I ought to go is, that it will prove and discipline myself. I shall come out of the trial stronger and more contented. I should like, too, to shew him that if he found it easy to forget, it is not so difficult for me to bear."

Oh, pride!

"My poor child, be warned," said the poor mother, in much affliction, folding the beautiful fragile little figure before her to her bosom,—"be warned. He will see that dear young face again; he will love you as much as ever. You will refuse him, and it will break your heart."

"No, Mamma, I have no fear,—I am stronger than you think."

A few months more, and how deeply were that dear mother's words engraven on poor "Mignon's" heart.

CHAPTER XIX.

MIGNONETTE.

Constancy lives in realms above,
And life is thorny, and youth is vain,
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.—COLERIDGE.

BUT the visit did not take place quite so speedily, after all. Before Emmy could write to tell Cecile of her intention to come to her, Mrs. Melton shewed signs of indisposition; and it was not until these had abated, and every alarm to which they had given rise had been set at rest, that the young lady would think of starting on her journey. Altogether, more than three weeks were lost by this occurrence, and it was nearly the middle of June before Emmy arrived at Kemp.

Meantime Herbert had, outwardly, at least, resumed most of his habitual composure, though some, and not least among them, Christina Percy, continued to detect that all was not right beneath. To this young lady, as was natural, his every act and movement formed at this juncture a subject of the deepest interest. His manner to her was the same as heretofore—easy, unaffected, confidential. The cause of disquietude then, whatever it was, was not on her account, she thought. Nevertheless, whatever it was, it absorbed all his heart for the time, and whatever

hopes her admiration for him, joined to the misjudged inuendoes of others, had given rise to, must remain as hopes still, though—of all things the most sickening—as hopes deferred. Christina, however, was too noble and disinterested to think of that, if she, indeed, herself regarded the matter in this light at all. The ruling sensation in her mind was rather sympathy for whatever distress it was that preyed upon him, than for any consequences which might accrue from it to herself. The succeeding pages of this history will amply prove how unselfish and disinterested she was, even when her own happiness was at stake.

The fact that the commencement of his uneasiness tallied exactly with the time of the arrival of his friend Dacre, made Christina regard this latter's conduct and demeanour with some curiosity also. But there was nothing to be read there. There was no lack of cordiality between the two friends, and whatever was the cause of Herbert's disquietude, it had no corresponding evidence in Dacre, nor, indeed, seemed to excite in any way his surprise or anxiety.

What may seem astonishing in these things was, that Christina's presence was in no way irksome during this time to Herbert himself. He saw her as constantly as heretofore, was thrown as much with her, talked and listened to her as before. But the fact must be borne in mind, that up to this time he had shewn no further sign of being attached to her than admiration; and though there was every probability of this ripening gradually into a tenderer feeling, yet that prevalence of the opinion that there would be a match between them arose from the con-

victions of those who knew least about the matter, and who, though not in love themselves, and, one would think, consequently less inclined to go at such a tremendous pace, are always in these cases a distance in advance of the actual lovers. Indeed, Dacre, who was but a stranger in Lamford, was rather astonished at the complacent manner in which this question was spoken of by some, as settled; and under the circumstances, he conceived it necessary to administer a damper to the ardent expectations of the gossiping part of the community,—and in this respect he did Herbert good service. Before Emmy arrived at Kemp, he had so far checked the opinions of those whose views were worth listening to, that the latter never heard of Herbert's probable engagement with Christina until after she had seen and spoken with him, and had pretty good reason for believing that there was no foundation in the report whatever. So that Dacre did not only Herbert good service, but Emmy also; for to have heard so complete a proof of her old lover's infidelity at the very commencement of her visit, would doubtless have added another cruel dart to the many that were already quivering in her gentle bosom.

Madame d'Aulaincourt was among the first upon whom Dacre brought his powers to bear in this respect. He told her, once for all, that she was premature, and that any such statement would not only annoy Herbert, but also defeat the event itself, if such were likely in the end to occur. Of course, Madame d'Aulaincourt, for her friend Christina's sake, was not likely to throw away such valuable ad-

vice; and she therefore both checked her daughter from alluding to this subject, and others also, whose opinions she knew to be of weight in the place.

During the three weeks which ensued after his arrival, Dacre used every effort to restore his friend's equanimity. To allude directly to the subject of his uneasiness too much, he thought indiscreet; and his aim was therefore more to distract his mind from painful thoughts than to remove those thoughts themselves. For this purpose he threw himself heart and soul into every scheme which he knew interested Herbert. Dr. Trentham was not quite ready with his arrangements for the new curate at Lamm's Ferry. Dacre undertook to fill the place for the present, to set the scheme fairly a-going; and after the lapse of one Sunday, two Services were duly commenced in the new Chapel School. This afforded Herbert the greatest pleasure, and he himself gladly joined in all the parochial arrangements necessary for perfecting the new scheme. Mr. Harbottle, on his side, shook his head. "As long as they had a real protestant there, like Mr. Dacre," he said, "it was all very well. But as it was now, he was only getting ready the ground for another Jesuit, as soon as Dr. Trentham could find him." Whereupon he received a precious scolding at the hands of Mr. Strong, who first got him into the most inextricable muddle as to the meaning of the word protestant, and then blew him up for talking about what he did not understand.

"Never mind," said the defeated polemicist to his wife, who indeed minded nothing about the matter. "Never mind Mr. Strong, I'll ask him to dinner, and

will get Mr. Dacre to meet him, and then see how he will get on."

Meantime, what are Herbert's feelings on the subject nearest his heart? Alas! sadly unsatisfactory. He is in that worst of positions of not knowing what course to take. Remorse for the pride of the past, a full conviction in his own heart that Emmy despises him, and a sensation, that he has behaved dishonourably to her after all, in spite of all Dacre said to the contrary that evening, are now his companions.

Why did he not take advice? some one will say. There was advice at hand: why did he not ask Dacre at once what course he would recommend? The answer is, that Herbert had no faith in Dacre's opinion on such matters: his mind was too matter-of-fact, too abrupt, to be able to give sound counsel on them. He would strip the matter of all the romance, which was perhaps the real cause of the mischief, and would treat it like a logarithm. Dacre might admire female character, and have a high opinion of sterling female excellence; but it was of abstract female character, and of abstract female excellence. Of the wayward workings of a loving woman's heart in all their intensity, he had no more idea than a picture-framer has of painting; at least, Herbert thought he had not. No: he could not consult Dacre, though the idea of reposing confidence in Henry Motcombe once or twice crossed his mind. It was a pity, for consulting Dacre would have been better than consulting no one; any step, in such a case as his, was better than no step. During one of the restless nights which he

passed at this season, he thought of going down at once to Bramsholme, and of seeing Mr. Melton. But the remembrance of that one letter of insult and obloquy called up the old feeling in his heart, and he could not do that. Had Dacre had the smallest notion that Emmy's visit would have been delayed as long as it was, he would probably have volunteered his advice to Herbert, that he should take this step at once. It was unquestionably the best that could be taken; if hope there was at all, it existed as long as the young lady remained at home. The journey once made, added one further difficulty; viz. the fear of the imputation of indelicacy on her part, in coming while a chance of their being reconciled remained open. Whether, had Herbert acted thus, Emmy would not have relented, or whether she could have resisted the importunity of father and mother as well as lover, backed as the cause would then have been by the *eclaircissement* respecting his own conduct, which the first of the three could have furnished, is more than we can take upon ourselves to decide. Our readers will doubtless agree that this is what he should have done, and will lament with us that he did not do it.

But time flies, and Miss Melton has arrived at Kemp. She came in the beginning of the week, but it was not till the middle of the next that the two met. Herbert had a nervous dread of a chance *rencontre*, and kept out of Lamford as much as lay in his power, while the family at Kemp were living as secluded as they could at this time: so that, excepting on Sunday, no opportunity arose for their doing so.

During Sunday, as it happened, Herbert was now altogether at Lamm's Ferry, thinking that at the services there his personal presence was necessary as well as useful. So that Emmy, from sheer curiosity, was fain to ask what had become of him. The answer pained her. Yes! the time had come, when it pained her almost as much to hear him spoken of well, as it once did to hear him aspersed. She was told that he was busy helping to bring the wicked, the needy, and the sorrowing to Christ. It pained her to think of so much good in one who for the cruel wrong he had done her, could never be hers. Moreover, it told her how completely she was forgotten. Perhaps that were better, after all, as the pain of meeting would be less, the less importance there was attached to it. And yet she wished the meeting was over. She did not distrust herself, but she wished it nevertheless over.

It was to take place at last, one Thursday evening, some ten days after her arrival. Colonel Deane had a few gentlemen to dinner, and Cecile and Emmy, with some others, were asked to come in the evening. Madame d'Aulaincourt wished her daughter to see a little variety now, and it would be fair to their guest to shew her some amusement. So they were to go.

When the gentlemen were moving from the dining-room that evening, Herbert remained behind for some minutes, on pretence of asking a trivial question of the Colonel. In fact, he felt for the moment quite ill at the meeting which was about to take place; and nothing but his own indignation at his weakness could

have mastered the extraordinary faintness which of a sudden crept over him.

Meantime Dacre, who was every whit as anxious to see the new flower as his friend seemed desirous to avoid doing so, hastened to the drawing-room, and while appearing to listen to some nonsense which Harbottle senior was pouring into his ears, on his favourite topic, was really taking an accurate survey of Miss Melton at the other end of the room. His first feeling was that of unmixed disappointment. A pale little girl, with large dark eyes, was opposite to him, nose *retroussè*, short, curling upper-lip, and very dark brown hair. What struck him most was the absence of expression in her countenance. Stay!—no!—she is turning her face. Those eyes have both softness and intelligence. And now she is smiling. The sudden transition from want of expression to a most winning animation quite startled him.

"Ah! no wonder you start," said Harbottle: "that is just what I did when I heard it. Such an underhand trick, &c."

At this moment Emmy rose to make room for some one on the sofa whereon she had been sitting, and in doing so, displayed the full grace and symmetry of her small, slight figure.

"A little model," said Dacre to himself.

"Now that is what I call mean, Sir," said Harbottle, in the heat of his communication.

"No, not *mean*," said Dacre to himself, in a low tone, in allusion to Mignonette; "insignificant, I thought at first, but not even that now."

"Well, *I* call it mean," said Harbottle, as he walked away.

Christina came by.—"May I ask the result of your scrutiny, Mr. Dacre?"

"Certainly," he said, with a smile. "I see that you have discovered me examining the last flower in the bouquet."

"I thought I noticed you," she replied. "I should so much like to know your opinion."

"Then you shall. But I shall expect your own in return. At first I was disappointed: now I am much interested; but must see more before I can form a better opinion."

"Oh! that is a most shabby one. I shall not give mine until you find me something more elaborate."

"A man cannot elaborate who lacks materials to work with," he answered. "I do not think Miss Melton beautiful: but those soft eyes and that short upper-lip are very taking. What is against one's first opinion is the want of expression when she is in repose."

"Come, that is a little better," said Christina. "My opinion will be a more general one. Ladies, you know, are not good judges of each other's beauties, and therefore you must be indulgent if mine seem unfair. I do not think Mignonette beautiful, but I think her exceedingly winning. Our sex, generally speaking, see nothing to admire in her, but with yours I can well understand the difference. Without much to admire or much to be struck with, she is just the sort of girl to inspire *une grande passion*—just the sort of girl whom a man would go half demented about."

"You are rather a dangerous discriminator of character," said Dacre: "I am getting frightened, lest you should hit upon my tender spot."

"You!" said Christina, with a laugh: "you of all men would be the most difficult to read, in connection with such a subject."

"Indeed!" replied Dacre; while he added to himself, "If she takes it into her head to read Herbert to-night, I suspect he will give her a pretty clear idea of her own chance. "But won't you introduce me to Mignonette?" he asked aloud.

"Certainly I will," said Christina; "and you must give me the rest of your *critique* by-and-bye."

The introduction was effected; and Dacre conversed with Emmy for some five or ten minutes. Later in the evening, when Christina called upon him for what he thought of her now that he had had a good opportunity of judging, he answered, "Ingilby named her well and appropriately. Like the flower by whose name he called her, she is not striking nor beautiful, but graceful and attractive, and her sweetness is as irresistible:" which was tolerably high-flown for so matter-of-fact a character.

It was while he was conversing with Mignonette that Herbert entered the room. His delay had caused Dacre some uneasiness, for he had complained of being unwell the whole day; but here he was now. Dacre knew he had entered, by Emmy's manner: her cheek blanched an unearthly whiteness for a second, and the expressionless look came over her face again. But she seemed to master herself with an effort, and soon her usual unembarrassed manner returned. He spoke

to her of Herbert,—how improved he was, and how much he owed the discipline of himself, and his temperateness in prosperity, to the days he passed at Bramsholme. All of which Emmy took complacently; for she was determined not to let her countenance betray what her heart felt.

Meantime she knew they should have to speak, and she would have given worlds to have had that over now. If Mr. Dacre would but bring him, she felt that she should go through it with less embarrassment; but that gentleman did not volunteer anything in this direction, and poor Emmy's uncertainty became intense. By degrees she raised her head, and gazed on Herbert. He looked strong and handsome, and his proud bearing gave evidence of his altered fortunes. But there was something wrong about him, which her young heart, that once beat in sympathy for his alone, discovered in a second. Could it be that he feared to meet her? Oh! that she had stayed away, sooner than have come to give him pain. Alas! there was that feeling still! and she tried to scorn herself for her weakness. While she was thus looking, he caught her eye; she could do no less than bow,—for most people in the room knew that they had been acquainted. A bright smile broke over his countenance—the old, well-known smile—and he moved towards her. At this moment a general stir was made, to give room to some one who was going to the piano, and Emmy and Herbert were both pressed into the recess formed by one of the windows. They shook hands, and Herbert asked after her mother. She answered coldly enough at first,

but her awkwardness soon began to wear off, and she to feel more at her ease; while Dacre looked on in astonishment.

Meanwhile the music commenced; and in the general hum which always ensues in private society in England when any one favours the company with a gratuitous musical performance, the two were able to converse unnoticed. Herbert soon forgot himself in the charm of her society; and it was but a short transition for him from ordinary topics to the "happy days" he spent at Bramsholme. Perhaps Emmy thought it best to check this, for she said gravely, "I am sure it does you credit that amidst such changes as have fallen on you — amid such fortune —you should still be able to remember them."

Herbert had never forgotten them: indeed, all his prosperity, all he possessed, he would willingly resign to have them back again.

Emmy looked at him with all the surprise of her dark eyes, at this speech. She did not reply for a moment; and he had the hardihood to ask her whether she had forgotten them. She looked very grave, and after a moment said, "No; I remember them well, as very foolish days, when much passed, both on my part and —— on the part of —— others, which I have regretted very much since. Still, I remember them; though there is little I can think of in them worth a thought." The blood rushed into her cheeks as she said this; and Dacre, who was watching her, thought to himself, "There goes the *coup de grace* for Master Herbert."

It was what some people would term a clincher for

Herbert, certainly, and he was so bewildered at first that he did not know what to say. He tried his old friend *pride* first, by saying to himself, "It was as I thought — she has forgotten me — faithless indeed! —she is not worth thinking of further." But in this instance his old friend would have nothing to say to him. Emmy, in her disdain, was infinitely prouder for the time than he; and as *pride* is a very coward in extremity, his fairly turned its back and made a clean run for it. He seemed so much to feel her last speech, that Emmy, fearing she had been rude, said in a low tone, "But we shall be always good friends, Mr. Capel, shall we not? Oh! say we shall be always good friends."

"My God! Emmy," he replied, in a whisper, that seemed almost to hiss from his mouth, "don't speak of it in that way, or you will kill me."

The song was ended; and they had no opportunity of conversing again during the evening. Some one came up to ask Emmy to sing, but she excused herself, feeling utterly unequal to anything of the sort after what had passed. As she was known, however, to be a good musician, this would have availed her but little, had not Dacre, who half guessed what had happened, come to her assistance, and led her away to a book of prints, for which she rewarded him with a look of gratitude that would have sent some men crazy.

The party broke up before eleven, and as Herbert seemed quite cast down and weary on getting into the phaeton, Dacre took the reins. The weather was intensely hot, and yet he could distinctly perceive his

companion shivering. To say anything to the point was out of the question, as there was a servant close behind them; and therefore Dacre confined his remarks to short sentences of mere general sympathy.

Dacre was rather addicted to smoking, and it was his ordinary custom to indulge this habit for half-an-hour every night previous to retiring to rest, in a room which Herbert, knowing his propensities, had set apart for that purpose previous to his arrival. On the evening in question he strongly recommended his host to go to bed, and even offered to forego the indulgence of his usual luxury, to come and talk him to sleep. But this the latter obstinately resisted, saying that the smell of the smoke pleased him, though no smoker himself. Dacre therefore proceeded to fumigate the apartment, while Herbert himself, seated in a chair opposite to him, with his head resting heavily on his hand, soon fell into a despondent reverie.

Had Henry Motcombe been in Dacre's place, he would soon have been roused from this. His case, as it stood at present, would soon have been gently handled. Kind enquiries, hopes suggested, even where none could exist, beside consoling reasoning, would have brought relief of some sort to the sufferer. But Dacre, though equally one of Christ's ministers, had not studied the art of consolation in the same way. He looked upon Herbert's as that sort of malady which must be suffered to die out of itself. Besides, it was one that, never having suffered himself, he did not know exactly how to attack; he considered it some romantic infatuation, which could not be met with the remedies which were effective in cases of ordinary

suffering. The only attempt at alleviation which he essayed, was characteristic: "Try a pipe," he said, and he even got a smile with this.

"It is no use minding me, old fellow," said Herbert, at last. "I am fairly beaten, and may be for some days. I only hope you will take care of yourself, and excuse me if I am wanting in attention."

"Don't trouble yourself about that," replied the other. "But I say, Capel, be a man, and cheer up. Why you are in a fever. Your skin is like a live coal. You are fretting yourself into an illness."

"It is nothing," said Herbert; "I shall be all straight, I dare say, to-morrow," though he did not think what he said.

"Not if you give in in this way, I'll be bound," replied Dacre; "I'll tell you what,—suppose we cut over to Paris for a week: it is not much use your staying here, is it?"

"Not a grain of use; and yet I could not go, if you were to offer me a mine."

"Oh! stuff: you must not talk in that way! Are you sure there is no hope?" He thought he would try another tack.

"I shall tell you that there is none to-night, and perhaps think that there is some to-morrow morning. That is just one reason why I could not go. No, you must wait and see how I feel."

To any other man than Herbert, there might not have seemed such an utter absence of hope in what Mignonette had said as he insisted there was. But it must be remembered that he knew her. He felt convinced now, moreover, though it had not occurred

to him before, that she would never have come to Lamford under the circumstances, had not her decision been taken against him. Besides, her manner was conclusive. There was such an air of gentle determination, and cutting reproach, and such an absence of anything like excitement or hesitation. That he should speak to her again, he thought likely, though in his present state he hardly knew what he should do; but that nothing short of some great stroke of fortune would change her mind in his favour, he was as certain as he was that Dacre was sitting in a chair opposite to him, with a pipe in his mouth. He had had no great hope before, and yet he was disappointed. He felt his doom when he first looked at her, and yet the blow seemed unexpected.

Dr. Crompton called on Madame d'Aulaincourt on the following morning, to see how she fared after her solitary evening, and inveighed against the healthy state of the neighbourhood. "There was no practice," he said, "literally no practice. If it had not been for Mr. Capel, up at Bickerton, he should have shut up his surgery for the day."

"Mr. Capel!" said Madame d'Aulaincourt, and her daughter, in surprise.

"Yes! poor Capel, the last man I should have thought would ever have wanted me: he is very sadly, too. Good deal of fever, and nervous excitement with it all, which I can't quite understand. Overworks himself, I think; he ought to get a wife to keep him in order."

Emmy Melton bent her head closer over the letter she was writing to her mother. This was but the

commencement, she thought. Already misgiving! "Oh! that she had staid away!"

And yet she never dreamt of changing: no, not for a moment. "He should have thought of her before he brought it on himself!"

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